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Commentary

Volume Sixty-one, Number One, January 1976

Western Guilt & Third World Poverty

P. T. Bauer

The Return of Islam

Bernard Lewis

In Praise of Alexander M. Bickel

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Not All Jewish Families Are Alike—A Story

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BOOKS IN REVIEW:
Edward Jay Epstein/John Wain
Carl Gershman/Rose G. Lewis
Jeri Laber

MUSIC:

Wagner Comes to Broadway

Samuel Lipman

FICTION:

The Riddle of Dos Passos

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A Dialogue on "Travesties"

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MOVIES:

Watching Lina Wertmuller

William S. Pechter

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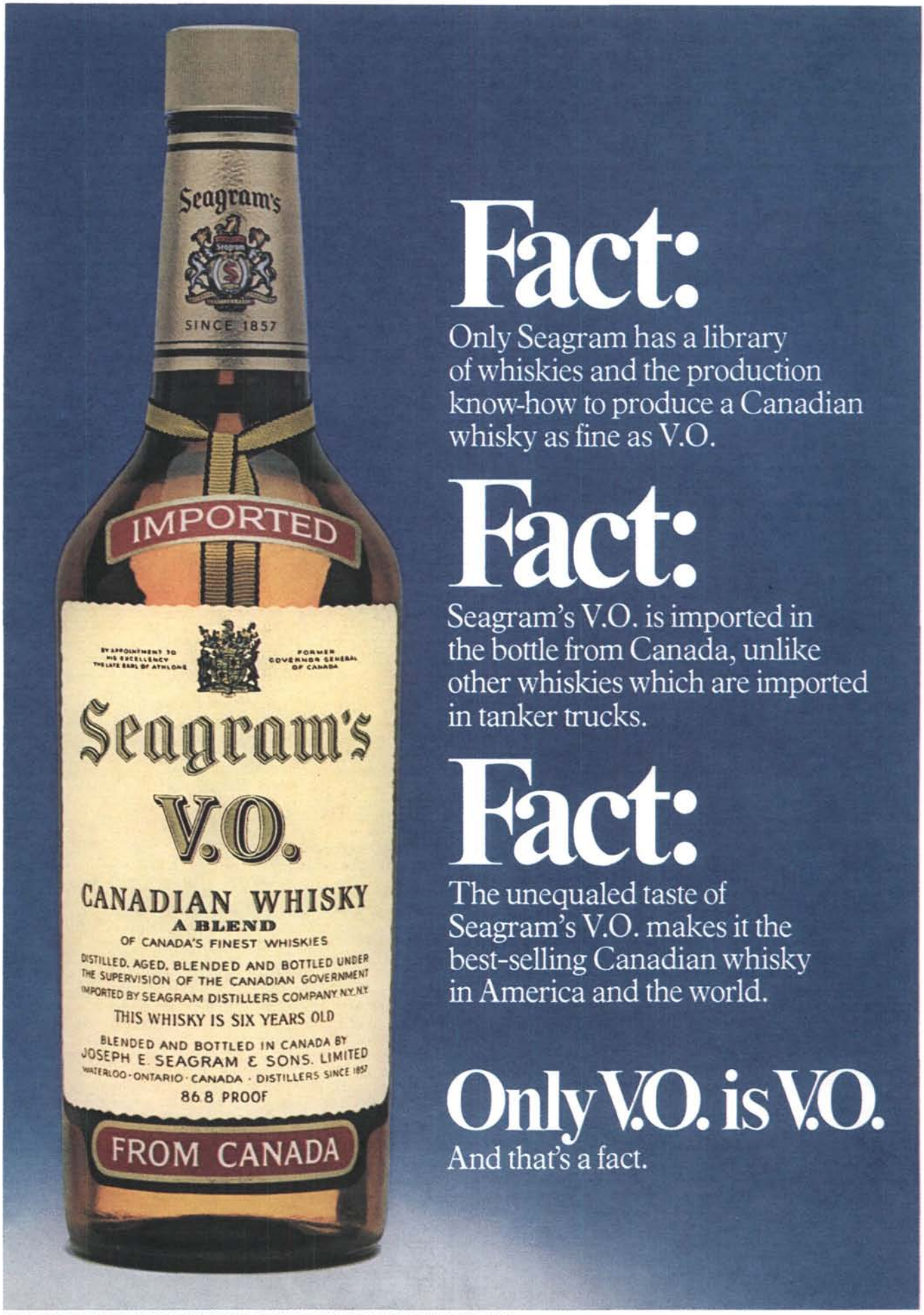
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Commentary

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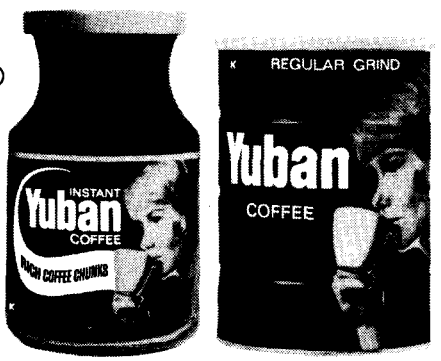

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Letters from Readers

Assassination Theories

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I would like to comment on "Conspiracy Fever" by Jacob Cohen [October 1975], not from the point of view of one who wishes to see the assassination laid at the doorstep of the CIA, the FBI, the KGB, or the family of Madame Nhu (that's a different story), but from the point of view of one who is interested in guns and knows something about weapons and ballistics.

First, the rifle. The 6.5 mm Carcano used by Oswald was a piece of junk when it was new (probably in the 1920's). The rifles sold as surplus in this country were brought over disassembled as scrap in order to qualify for a lower import duty. They were then reassembled from parts, a process that did nothing to improve any inherent accuracy. The Carcano was not designed to have a scope mounted on it. Such rifles are more difficult to shoot with a scope than those which are specifically designed for scopes.

This brings us to the scope. Oswald's rifle had a very cheap scope mounted on it . . . which would not offer any promise of accuracy. When the rifle was tested by government authorities, it was found that the scope was loose and required a shim (a thin piece of metal between the mount and receiver of the rifle) in order to be used. *This is crucial.* If the weapon was in this condition when Oswald fired it, he could not have hit the automobile, let alone Kennedy.

Now we come to Oswald's ammunition. We know that he used a mixed bag of cartridges. Exhibit 399, the "magic bullet," was a full-jacketed military round. The bullet which caused the head wound and which disintegrated was a soft-point sporting round. Other things being equal, different bullets in the same rifle will shoot to *different points of impact.*

What does all this prove? It doesn't prove a thing. It doesn't show that Oswald was not the lone assassin.

What it does show is the remarkable odds against this case. Oswald could have done it, by himself and unaided, if everything went just so. Based on my three points, however, I feel that the odds against this are fantastic. I would not be at all surprised if there was someone else shooting at the same time, not necessarily known to Oswald.

LEO SIROTA

Baltimore, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Jacob Cohen addresses some specific points that the critics of the Warren Commission have raised and attempts to refute them with some rather labored and tortuous reasoning. His main target is the "recklessness of . . . critics of the Warren Commission and the tolerance for recklessness which has developed in this country in the last decade." . . . But I insist that it is the defenders of the Report, not the critics, who are reckless. This can be shown by exposing the larger, overall pattern of events that the Warren Report asks us to accept; there is no need to examine the million specific items of evidence, whose details are subject to challenge and controversy. Step back from the trees and get a view of the forest. This is best achieved by looking at two different behavior patterns:

1) Did Oswald behave the way a lone killer might be expected to?

2) Did the police, FBI, and Secret Service behave as if they really thought the man they caught was acting alone?

Note the following facts, acknowledged both by critics and defenders. Moments after the shooting, Oswald is observed casually drinking a Coca-Cola at a vending machine. Then, after leaving the murder site on foot, he takes a bus that passes the site again on its way to his home. He has made no plans to flee the country or even the city. He only wants to go home to get his second gun, with which he later shoots a policeman. Why the sudden need for another gun after he has made good his escape? Doesn't this clearly indicate that Oswald perceived a new, unanticipated danger? Since the police were not chasing him at that point, is it reckless to conclude that someone else was? Is this the behavior of a murderer working alone (and successfully, at that), or is it the behavior of someone who feels betrayed or double-crossed? When Oswald is finally captured, what does he say? A lone assassin would

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either boast of his feat or he would deny involvement. Oswald did neither. In a brief exposure to the press at the Dallas police station, he said, "They are making me the patsy," or words to that effect. Is it reckless to claim that this hints at greater complexity than a simple denial? And then, of course, Oswald was permanently silenced before he could elaborate further. He had no chance to hire a lawyer or make a statement to a court. Very convenient.

Consider another aspect of Oswald's behavior: his pre-assassination activities. It is known that he had government training in an intelligence-related field while in the Marine Corps. Afterward, when dealing with the government bureaucracy, he was able to circumvent the red tape. Whether he requested discharge from the military, or re-issuance of a passport forfeited upon defection to Russia, or entry and exits from foreign countries, he had but to ask, and it was given. The curtain of red tape that impedes the rest of us was always pulled aside to speed Oswald on his way. Since Oswald had no money, no business connections, no regular job, and no known influential friends, is it not obvious that he had to have had covert government assistance of some kind? And since he was intelligence-trained, fluent in Russian, and married to the niece of a Russian intelligence officer, is it reasonable to conclude that his travels and activities were merely the random wanderings of a lost soul? Are skeptics reckless in pointing out that this is a pattern typical of covert intelligence activities? It is not my purpose to hazard a guess as to whom Oswald was working with or for, or why he was doing whatever he was doing. But what I am sure of is that the Warren Commission was trying hard, much too hard, to convince us that Oswald was a loner, a misfit, who did everything on his own, uninvolved with others. Nonsense, utter nonsense.

What about the behavior of the police? After Oswald was killed in the police station, we eagerly awaited disclosure of the results of the two-day interrogation so we could at least find out what Oswald meant when he said he was being made the "patsy." He had been interrogated for many hours by three different law-enforcement agencies: the Dallas police, the FBI, and the Secret Service. Afterward, each agency said it had not made notes, kept no transcript; this despite the observed presence of a stenographer in the interrogation room. We were assured that Oswald said nothing of any interest, other than denials of guilt. Is the total absence of detailed notes the normal behavior of investigators who have just cracked the biggest murder case of our time? Are we really reckless in claiming that these patterns clearly show that someone is covering up something, or, more likely, that a lot of people are covering up a lot of things? . . .

LEWIS LEDERER
Rockville, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Jacob Cohen ridicules the contentions of those who are honestly, and I think understandably, concerned about the non-fatal wound in President Kennedy's back. For example, the whole question of the back wound is complicated by the fact that the autopsy pathologists did not dissect the neck and upper back of the President. Such a procedure in a gun-shot wound incident is routine. . . . The fact that this wound was not dissected at autopsy certainly raises a question about the competence of those who performed the autopsy. At least it does raise the question of why the wound was not dissected.

In a sworn statement made after the Warren Commission hearings, one of the autopsy pathologists maintained that the back wound was not dissected because a high-ranking military officer, unnamed, ordered the pathologists not to make such a dissection. Later it was learned that the high-ranking officer was not a physician and in fact had no competence in the area of forensic science.

There is another problem associated with the autopsy which is not always realized. At Parkland Hospital at least four highly trained competent surgeons, of unquestionable reputation, stated that they had inserted into the President's chest cavity special tubes which they felt would relieve pressure in the chest and aid any possible breathing that the wounded President might be attempting. Each surgeon worked together with a second surgeon to insert these tubes. There is no question about the fact that this technique was part of their treatment procedure. To be specific, they cut holes in the chest wall of the President and inserted these tubes. However, at autopsy, we are told, the chest cavity of the late President showed a completely intact wall. In other words, the autopsy pathologists denied the existence of any hole going into the chest cavity. It seems obvious that confusion has arisen about this. It is hard to accept the idea that four competent, trained surgeons would think they had put holes in a man's chest when they actually hadn't. This is especially true when the surgeons were working as a team. One surgeon might, in the confusion of the treatment room, miss and insert the tube in some way that did not invade the chest cavity. A miss by four trained surgeons is so improbable as to be labeled virtually impossible. How then do the pathologists report no invasion of the chest cavity? We do not know. But we also are concerned why, the color photographs of the internal wall of the President's chest cavity have been suppressed up to this time.

Another matter that seems not to disturb Mr. Cohen is the fact that the Kennedy family took possession of the autopsy materials, including X-rays and photographs, and even now are exercising censorship over the use of these materials. Such a situation is unique in the history of the United States. Materials that are pertinent to a capital crime do not become the private property of the victim's family. These materials belong to the state; they may be subject to restricted use only by the appropriate court, not by a private family. This strange arrangement with respect to the Kennedy autopsy materials is just another item in a whole mosaic of strange and unusual circumstances that lead to honest questions.

I personally am bewildered by Mr. Cohen's referring to "Dr Wecht's species of respectable fanaticism." . . . Dr. Wecht is widely respected in this country and around the world as a leader in forensic medicine. He is past president of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences. By no stretch of the imagination can one call him a fanatic. I am surprised that this kind of character assassination is permitted in COMMENTARY. I submit that there is in the entire article a flavor of the old logical fallacy known as *argumentum ad hominem*. . . .

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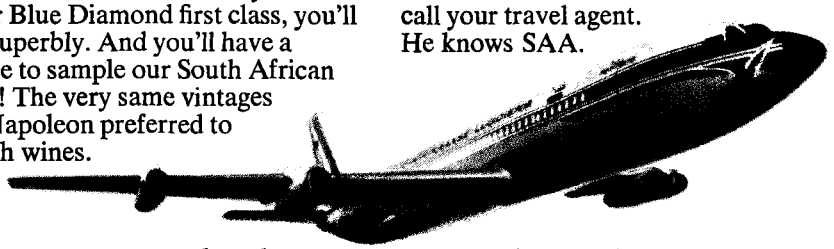

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I would now like to discuss the so-called pristine (or stretcher) bullet which according to the Warren Commission is said to have gone through the President's body, entering the back and coming out in the lower neck, missing all bone in its passage through the President's body from a right to left direction. The bullet then is said to have entered the extreme right side of Governor Connally's body, tearing out his fifth rib leaving the body and smashing through his right wrist and ending up in his right thigh. During its passage this bullet left significant amounts of lead, and other metal particles, in Connally's body. Included in these particles is a clearly visible particle in Governor Connally's right thigh bone.

But the bullet, when carefully examined and photographed, seems virtually undeformed. There is a slight notch in the nose, where the FBI took a sample of metal for analysis. The base of the bullet is depressed in a lateral way, a condition which raises a serious question about the real possibility that this deformation occurred after the bullet was fired.

Moreover, Mr. Cohen seems not to be aware of the fact that the Warren Commission impugned its own pathologists who under oath all agreed that the so-called pristine bullet could not have caused all of the injuries seen in Governor Connally. . . . I have had extensive experience with gunshot wounds, but I have yet to see a bullet, even a bullet moving at low velocity, that does not become deformed in some way when it hits bone. The idea that this pristine bullet could have smashed a rib and a wrist and shown up with no deformation is so improbable as to be impossible.

Indeed, Mr. Cohen seems unaware of the fact that the Warren Commission itself was not very certain about its stand. The subjunctive mood is used so widely in the Report that if the defenders of the Commission interpret the Report carefully, the conclusion with respect to the one-bullet theory is really not a conclusion at all. It is a carefully worded *possibility* with the subjunctive mood used most judiciously.

Present forensic scientists who are concerned about the inadequacies of the Warren Report on the death of President Kennedy do not subscribe to the theory that the head shot that killed the President came from the front. Dr. Finck, the army pathologist who was part of the autopsy team, described in some detail what was clearly an entrance wound in the back of the President's skull. He showed an illustration of why he arrived at that conclusion. The conclusion is in line with the general principles that we all teach in our courses in forensic science. Therefore, from the autopsy material now available to us, there is no reason to question the direction from which the fatal wound to the President came.

Mr. Cohen and others who have tried to maintain that the shot came from the front because of the way the President's head moved after being shot, completely misunderstand how bullets exert their action. Bullets do not push people in any direction. Western movies and television "whodunits" tend to mislead the average person into thinking that when a bullet hits someone, that individual then is pushed over as if hit with a battering ram. This is not so. Whatever direction the President's head moved is really not relevant to the direction of the bullet. Once a bullet enters the skull, for example, it exerts its energy in all directions; it completely puts out a functioning brain. Therefore the muscles of the body are at the mercy of any physical forces such as gravity, movement of the automobile, and so forth. The direction of the President's head movement had nothing to do with the direction of the bullet. There seems to be at this time no evidence of the head shot resulting from a bullet coming from anywhere but behind.

The same conclusion does not obtain with respect to the non-fatal wounds of the President and of Governor Connally. To refer to honest scientists who would like to see an objective evaluation of all the evidence as cranks is a personal attack on individuals who do not agree with the party line.

But secrecy is always suspect. If in fact there are no deficiencies of a serious nature in the Warren Commission Report, why then is there this paranoia on the part of so many officials and so many defenders of the Report to keep the mass of information, presumably available in the National Archives, secret? Why are there so many barriers to an adequate reexamination of this material? Why was there never an adequate dissection of the brain of the late President? These are serious questions that . . . deserve an answer.

In my opinion, as a forensic scientist who has modest qualifications in the area, the John F. Kennedy murder case should be reopened; not in the form of a congressional investigation, but rather by setting up a panel of competent civilian forensic scientists. These scientists should have absolutely no connection with the federal government. They should be given complete and uninhibited access to all the materials that are still in existence related to the situation. I also urge that one or two foreign, European forensic scientists be asked to join this panel. These individuals should then reexamine all the material without interference from any governmental agency, and come up with their final evaluation. . . . Until such a project is undertaken, there will be a continuing lack of belief in government pronouncements coming from Washington. . . . Previous panels that examined the situation were not free of government interference. They were appointed by specific government officials and were under the thumb of these officials.

May I end by suggesting that if anyone should have the finger of shame pointed at him, it is Mr. Cohen for his immoderate and inappropriate personal attacks on many concerned and qualified technical experts who would like to see this sad case finally and objectively evaluated.

CHARLES G. WILBER
Director and Deputy County Coroner
Larimer County, Colorado

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . In the conflict over the location of President Kennedy's back wound, Jacob Cohen sides with the Warren Commission and puts this wound at the base of the neck. . . .

But he passes over an FBI report by agents who attended the autopsy who describe the hole as "below the shoulders," photographs of the President's shirt and jacket which show the hole to be some four inches below the base of the neck, and a sketch made by a doctor at the autopsy. To Mr. Cohen these are "human errors" and the supposition is that the President's shirt and coat hunched up his neck as he waved to the crowd.

But Mr. Cohen is apparently unaware of a document that virtually

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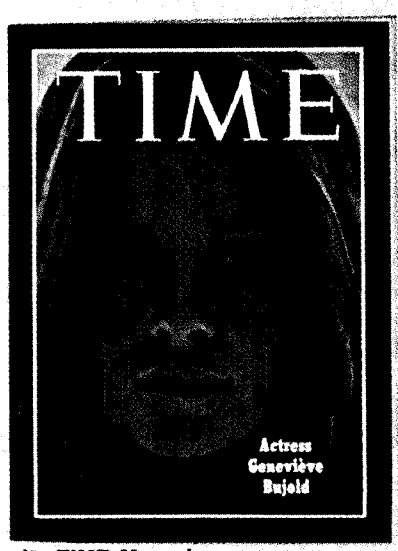

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pinpoints the back wound. Admiral George G. Burkley's death certificate describes this wound "in the posterior back" as being at about "the level of the third thoracic vertabra," or three or four inches below the shoulder.

With the body before him, Commander Boswell diagrammed the wound in the same place as Burkley's description. But this is not news. However, the original diagram contains the notation, "verified by G. Burkley." The Warren Commission published this document with Dr. Burkley's verification missing.

Add to this the rather extraordinary contemporaneous notes taken by a Secret Service agent riding in a car following the President. Agent Bennett wrote that he saw a bullet strike the President "about four inches down from the right shoulder."

Which of these two versions is more believable? A photograph, the descriptions of two FBI agents, the sketch of an autopsy doctor, and the eyewitness account of a Secret Service agent, or the Warren Commission's reconstruction based on a single measurement scribbled in the margin of the diagram?

On November 24, 1963, autopsy surgeon Commander James J. Humes certified that he had "destroyed by burning certain preliminary draft notes relating" to this autopsy. Why? The Commission didn't ask.

The original certificate contained a handwritten note, "accepted and approved this date. George G. Burkley. Rear Adm. M.C.U.S.N., Physician to the President." Burkley was Humes's superior and it would appear that Humes was following orders. Whose? Nobody asks. Again, Burkley's authorization is absent from the published document.

That's not all. Commander Humes's handwritten (undated) autopsy report contains corrections with the marginal initials of Admiral Burkley beside them. These initials have been removed from the published exhibit, thus making it appear that Commander Humes corrected his own report, when in fact the White House medical officer did.

If Lyndon Johnson, through Admiral Burkley, was correcting, supervising, and authorizing (ordering?) the destruction of certain preliminary draft notes, one might properly ask why.

In any political murder is it wise to allow the beneficiaries, no matter their virtue, to supervise the autopsy of the victim? Was it necessary to omit these White House authorizations and verifications from the official record?

Mr. Cohen attacks the critics for suggesting that a bullet was planted at Parkland Hospital. If this were a function of a plot, he asks, then how would this "bullet messenger" know where to plant it or even if it would be necessary to plant a bullet? Good point. Mr. Cohen is assuming the assassins were outside the motorcade. What if they were within the presidential party? In this case, wouldn't they have the run of Parkland hospital, know that a bullet was needed—perhaps to replace one of theirs?

It was not the critics, as Mr. Cohen suggests, but a Secret Service agent who rode in the President's car who first advanced the theory, in the autopsy room, that the bullet that struck Kennedy in the back "worked itself out," and onto a stretcher where it was ultimately recovered by another Secret Service agent, who carried it to Washington.

When police pass along evidence they are trained to inscribe it to establish a chain of possession. However, in the case of the Parkland bullet, this procedure was ignored. The only inscription on CE399 came from two FBI agents who received it from Secret Service Chief Rowley that evening. About the only conclusion consistent with this chain of possession is that Oswald fired a bullet in Dallas and hit the Washington headquarters of the FBI.

FRED T. NEWCOMB
PERRY ADAMS
Van Nuys, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

According to Jacob Cohen, Dr. Cyril Wecht, one of the world's most renowned forensic pathologists, is a kind of "respectable fanatic." The epithets he reserves for other critics of the Warren Commission (including myself) are more pungent: we are "reckless," "conscious liars," guilty of "conscious deceit." And why are we all these awful things? Because, it turns out, we disagree with Mr. Cohen.

Take, for example, Mr. Cohen's claim that I am "dishonest" because I don't acknowledge any problem with the contention that Governor Connally was hit through the chest and forearm (two inches up from the wrist) between Zapruder frames 237 and 238. In the six hundredths of a second between these two frames we observe (even according to Mr. Cohen) dramatic changes in Governor Connally. Fourteen frames earlier, at Zapruder frame 224, President Kennedy is already reacting to a bullet hit. Over the intervening fourteen frames Connally gives no indication of having been struck by a bullet. Then, suddenly, between frames 237 and 238 dramatic changes occur: his right shoulder is driven down by 20 degrees, his cheeks puff with air, his hair is dislodged. Mr. Cohen acknowledges these effects and then accuses me of being "dishonest." Why? Because I won't agree with him that at this point Connally's wrist/forearm is not in a position to have incurred the wound his doctors describe.

Mr. Cohen's view may hold some plausibility for a reader who has not seen the relevant photographs. It probably does little good to point out that to me and most others who have looked at these photographs Connally's wrist/forearm *does* appear to be in the right position to have been hit at this point. Yet if my own opinion on this point cannot be taken as authoritative, perhaps the opinion of the doctor who operated on Connally's arm might be seen as more authoritative than the opinions of either Mr. Cohen or myself. Dr. Charles Gregory testified before the Warren Commission as to his treatment of Governor Connally. Just before testifying he was shown individual frames from the Zapruder film with a view to determining when the Governor was hit. In response to a question from Commission Counsel Arlen Specter, Dr. Gregory remarked:

> It seemed to me in frames marked 234, 235, and 236 Governor Connally was in a position such that a single missile entered his back, could have passed through his chest, through his right forearm, and struck his thigh.

I find it amusing that the very doctor who worked on Connally's arm should pick out just those frames where Mr. Cohen states an alignment is *impossible* as the *most likely* point where an alignment occurs. Nor should one neglect the

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testimony of Dr. Robert Shaw, who operated on Governor Connally's chest:

> *Dr. Shaw*: . . . And in trying to place this actual frame that these frames are numbered when the Governor was hit, my opinion was that it was frame number, let's see, I think it was No. 36.
>
> *Mr. Specter:* 236?
>
> *Dr. Shaw:* 236, give or take 1 or 2 frames. It was right in 35, 36, 37, perhaps.

So much for Mr. Cohen's opinion as to the position of Governor Connally's arm at Zapruder frame 237.

There is, however, powerful additional evidence that Connally's wrist was hit at this point. At Zapruder frame 230 he can be seen quite clearly sitting composed, holding his Stetson in his extended right arm. The following frames are a bit blurred, but the wrist appears undamaged up until frames 239 and 240 where it begins to droop downward. By the mid-240's his right hand and wrist have collapsed even further. By frame 249 his wrist can be seen dangling nearly straight down as he falls backward into Mrs. Connally's arms. Everything we see on the Zapruder film suggests that Connally's wrist was hit between frames 237 and 238—the very point where Mr. Cohen alleges it could *not* have been hit.

The other, less original points in Mr. Cohen's polemic may be rebutted in a similar fashion. For my part I would not want to call him "dishonest" just because he disagrees with me, or because he did not mention Drs. Shaw and Gregory's testimony or what the Zapruder film shows concerning Connally's wrist injury. I suspect he was unaware of it. Pressed to fling an insult back at Mr. Cohen, the most I could muster would be the observation that he is probably not very well-informed about many of these matters.

JOSIAH THOMPSON
Haverford, Pennsylvania

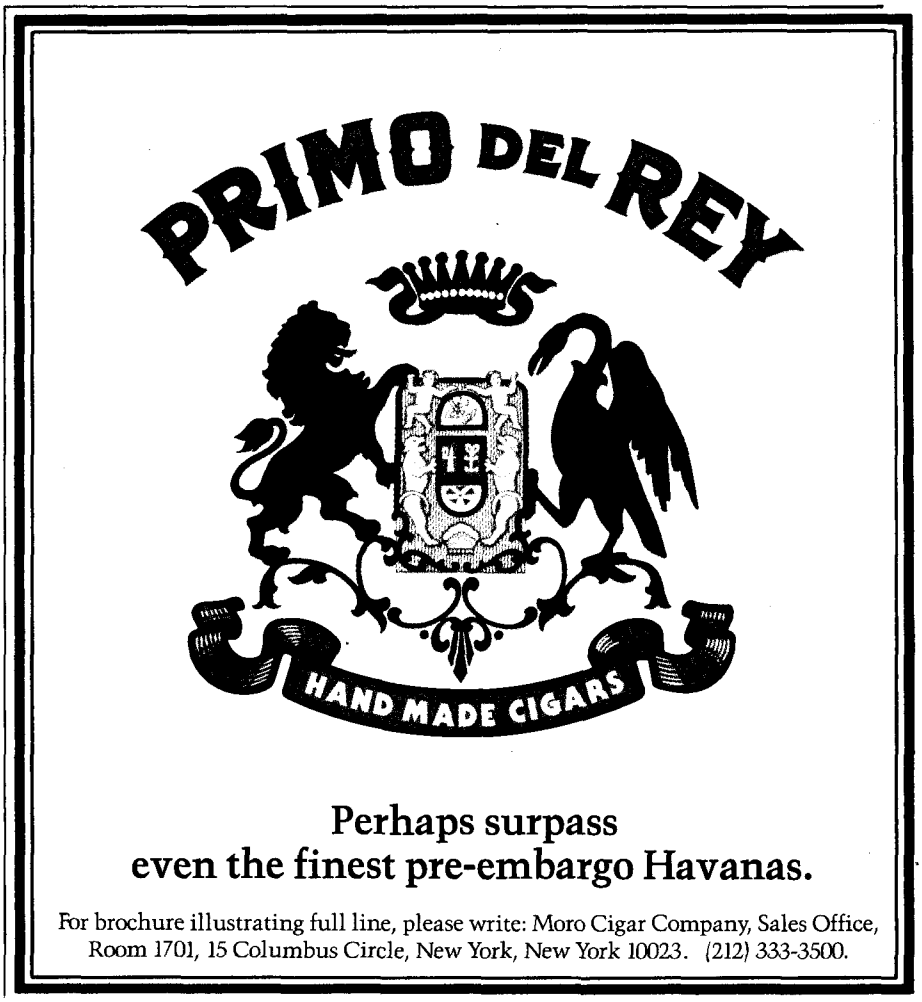
TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Jacob Cohen's carefully documented article effectively refutes the conspiratorial theories surrounding the Kennedy assassination and the Rosenberg and Hiss cases. However, Mr. Cohen does not address himself to the issue of why such theories arise so frequently and achieve such great popularity and acceptance. No doubt there are some proponents of conspiracy theories whose interests are primarily self-serving—to sell a book or achieve personal notoriety—but it seems doubtful that this is the primary motivation of all the conspiracy advocates, and in no way does it apply to those who simply accept these ideas without publicizing them.

I believe that the underlying motivation in the advocacy and acceptance of conspiracy theories is the fundamenal human need to deal with the anxiety aroused by uncertainty and irrationality. To find a conspiracy gives one control over a situation; a conspiracy may be evil, but it is comprehensible, it can be fought against, it can be defeated. How much more comforting to believe this than to think that the murder of the most powerful man on earth was the irrational act of a deluded mind—a circumstance over which we can have no control because we can neither comprehend nor predict it.

The need to master the uncertain universe through making it rational finds its expression in both science and religion. Both are systems which offer explanations for the turbulent events governing our lives, and both offer methods to control these events—the one through natural means, the other through appeals to supernatural forces. The relief of anxiety that comes from the establishment of certainty finds its clinical expression in the familiar observation that the decompensating and frightened schizophrenic patient actually experiences relief when he forms a delusion explaining his (up to then) incomprehensible anxiety. For him, too, there are no coincidences; the footsteps outside the doors are his persecutors, the car horn outside the window is a signal. Although frightening in and of themselves, the delusions permit the patient to "understand" what is happening to him and to do something about it, at the very least to hide in his room.

Thus it is with conspiracy theories. In a turbulent, confused, and often irrational world, it is com-



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forting to realize that there are, after all, people plotting all these events, and, if we can just find them out, we can stop them, or, at the very least, we can hide in our rooms.

ITAMAR SALAMON
Department of Psychiatry
Albert Einstein College
of Medicine
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Referring to my book, *The Assassination Tapes*, Jacob Cohen writes: "A writer like George O'Toole . . . rehearses lines of argument which he admits are farfetched. . . ."

I don't know what Mr. Cohen has in mind in this perhaps intentionally vague passage, but he creates the impression that I have half-heartedly offered improbable objections to the official government theories of the assassination of President Kennedy. In fact, my book was written in earnest and every assertion and allegation is thoroughly supported by the documentary and tape-recorded evidence I have cited in the text. Furthermore, in the months since the first publication of *The Assassination Tapes*, not one of the witnesses I interviewed has come forward to say I misquoted him or to explain the serious discrepancies between his version of the events of November 22, 1963 and the facts as established elsewhere.

Mr. Cohen notes that *The Assassination Tapes* "received a big play in the sex magazines," apparently referring to the fact that two chapters of my book were published in *Penthouse* magazine. I don't know how to respond to this kind of McCarthyism except to point out that Tad Szulc, Harrison Salisbury, Karl Hess, Jeff Gerth, and other outstanding journalists have recently contributed to the pages of *Penthouse*. But Mr. Cohen refers to "sex magazines," implying through his use of the plural that my book received "a big play" in several such publications. Apparently Mr. Cohen's familiarity with sex magazines is more extensive than my own, so I cannot refute his charge.

In his next paragraph Mr. Cohen charges that "many" of the critics of the Warren Report are "conscious liars." It is regrettable that COMMENTARY chose to print this cowardly libel, which defames a whole group of people without offering any of them the chance to reply. If Mr. Cohen had the courage to name those he finds guilty of lying, he would have the opportunity to present his evidence for such a charge in a court of law.

That compendium of lies and absurdities known as the Warren Commission Report can make but one tenuous claim to credibility: the reputations of the seven men who signed their names to it. Perhaps it should not be surprising, then, that the frequent tactic of defenders of the Warren Report is to defame those who dare to dissent from its conclusions.

GEORGE O'TOOLE
Gaithersburg, Maryland

JACOB COHEN writes:

I shall comment on the letters one at a time and in order.

The points raised by Leo Sirota are entirely academic. The best proof that a gunman could have hit the President using Oswald's rifle, is that one did. The rifle, indubitably Oswald's, was found shortly after the assassination on the sixth floor of the Texas Book Depository building, where several witnesses saw a gun or gunman just before the assassination. Ballistics tests conducted the next day by the FBI established that the nearly intact bullet and two large fragments which were recovered had been fired from that rifle to the exclusion of all others. Later, outside experts confirmed these conclusions; there is not even a hint of a second gun in the ballistics reports or discussion of those reports. When pressed, the critics claim that the bullets from an alleged second and, for some, third gun have mysteriously disappeared. I don't know where Mr. Sirota came up with his "soft-point" bullet: the bullet and bullet fragments recovered were of the same "full-jacketed" sort and many subsequent tests have shown that they were fully capable of causing the head wound. If Mr. Sirota is interested in pursuing the academic point, I direct him to the article of Dr. John K. Lattimer, *et al.*, in the *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine* (April 1972) or to an account of the 1968 CBS News documentary by Stephen White, *Should We Now Believe the Warren Report?* (Macmillan), which should convince the convincible that Oswald's rifle was accurate enough and powerful enough, and the ammunition he used reliable enough, to have done all the Warren Commission said it did.

While I did not go into questions of Oswald's guilt or alleged evidences of a prior conspiracy in my article, Lewis Lederer is correct in guessing that I support the Warren Commission's contention that Oswald was the lone assassin and would support, with a slight qualification, the Commission's conclusion that there is no evidence of a prior conspiracy. In answer to Mr. Lederer's first question, I would say Oswald acted exactly the way a killer would have acted: he fled the scene of the crime, he killed a policeman soon thereafter and then fled that scene, he resisted when arrested, the murder pistol in his possession, and, if you can believe his several interrogators, he lied several times during extensive questioning for which, alas, we have no transcript. Beyond that, the evidence implicating him in the assassination and placing him at the scene is simply immense, i.e., it was his gun, he had brought it that morning, his palm and finger prints were found on the cardboard boxes below and next to the window through which shots came. I do not find his protestations of innocence, or his claim that he is a patsy, exculpatory. Many guilty men have said the same. To be sure, the street witnesses who say they saw him on the sixth floor are shaky, and no one has placed him at the source of the assassination at the precise moment of the shooting. But then no one has placed him elsewhere either. The Warren Commission could only go on the evidence it had, which is very winning, if not a million per cent conclusive. I have often wondered why the mysterious forces which allegedly were framing and/or betraying Oswald and which have supposedly persuaded hundreds of people to lie or remain silent, could not have gotten someone to place him at the scene of the shooting.

As for the possibility of a prior conspiracy of some sort involving Oswald with the CIA or FBI or KGB, I cannot prove a negative, I cannot prove that there was *not* such a conspiracy, I can only say that I have seen no evidence establishing one or which would even give rise to plausible suspicions. I think I am aware of every line of insinuation taken by the critics and the evidence which, they say, provokes their suspicion. I have also studied the history of witch

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hunts, purge trials, and the rampaging accusations of persecutors and would-be persecutors like Senator Joseph McCarthy and District Attorney Jim Garrison and know how easily innocent coincidence can be made to seem sinister. For me, Oswald's peregrinations to and from Russia are given plausible explanation in the Warren Report. Unlike Mr. Lederer, I find him to be a quintessential misfit and loner, and, I might say, a most unlikely spy. But let me add this qualification: like most citizens I have been startled by recent FBI and CIA revelations. When Senator Schweiker announced in late October that in one week he would "blow the top off the Warren Report" with revelations about important materials kept from the Commission by the FBI and CIA, I was acutely interested in what he might reveal. I still am.

I turn now to the muddled communication of Charles G. Wilber, whose reputation for close reading must suffer a bit in light of his accusation that *I* think there was an assassin to the right front of the President. I refuted this contention at great length and am delighted to add Dr. Wilber to the long list of forensic pathologists which I gave in my article who ridicule this major contention of the Warren Report critics.

Like many forensic pathologists, including, most prominently, Dr. Wecht, Dr. Wilber questions the competency, in forensic pathology, of the autopsy team. But the whole point of my article was that we need no longer rely on the original autopsy because its findings with regard to the pivotal questions of the assassination have been sustained by some thirteen doctors, including seven forensic pathologists, who, since 1968, have examined the X-rays and photographs and other autopsy material. Since Dr. Wilber is partial to presidents of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, let me add that since my article appeared the president-elect of that organization, Dr. James Weston, has reported on CBS that his week-long review of autopsy materials confirms the autopsy findings with regard to the single-assassin theory. Every doctor, including Dr. Wecht, who has seen that material agrees (1) that there was no hit from the right front, and (2) that the bullet which struck Kennedy in the back passed through his body at a downward angle and out his throat. Of all these, only Dr. Wecht still dissents from the Warren Commission's conclusions, but not for the same reasons he did before he saw the autopsy materials. Why is Dr. Wilber's letter silent with regard to these findings and opinions of his colleagues? What does he mean at the end of his letter when he says that "previous panels that examined the situation were not free of governmental interference"? Are the professional judgments of the doctors on the Clark panel, and of the doctors who have seen the materials since, suspect? No scholar can oppose the reopening of any case, and I do not oppose the reopening of this one, but the fact is that with regard to the autopsy findings the case has been reopened and the Warren Commission sustained, and yet respectable fanatics press on.

A final word to Dr. Wilber. Far from being unaware of the Kennedy family's selfish and provocative role in keeping medical material from the Warren Commission and the general public, I was the first writer to delineate that role, as I pointed out in my article. I think the Kennedys have acted selfishly and unwisely in the matter, but I find nothing sinister in the possibility that they did not wish to share the President's broken body or some details of his health with the general public.

Fred T. Newcomb and Perry Adams also fail to comment on the expert analysis and reanalysis of X-rays and photographs which have taken place over the years since the appearance of the Warren Report, decisively resolving earlier ambiguities. I did not question the honesty of the mistakes made by what I termed the first-generation critics, though I find the conspiracy implicit in the earliest allegations beyond rational belief. But what of those second- and third-generation writers and lecturers, trained scholars, lawyers, doctors, who would discuss questions like the location of the back wound and never even mention to their audiences that others have reviewed the autopsy materials and confirmed the original autopsy report? That's called covering up, and the appearance of such activity by critics deserves the same plain characterization as its appearance in government.

Two other points. With regard to the bullet plant, even a Secret Service agent would not have known on November 22, 1963 that a bullet was needed on Connally's stretcher because the necessity of such a bullet for a single-assassin theory was not clear for months afterward. Second, Commander Humes has said that he destroyed the notes because he didn't want to leave those blood-spattered remains of the President he loved to posterity. I think he erred, but consider this: if he burned them to cover up a lie, would he have left a note saying he had burned them?

Josiah Thompson, like Dr. Wilber, protests my characterization of Dr. Wecht, but I'm afraid that what his letter says and does not say lends further substance to my other characterizations. In his book, *Six Seconds in Dallas*, Mr. Thompson defends three primary hypotheses about the assassination: (1) On the basis of his close analysis of the Zapruder frames 313 *et seq.*, which show Kennedy's head and body moving and turning sharply to the left, he claims that the President was struck sharply from a source to the right and perhaps slightly in front of him. (2) He claims that the bullet which struck Kennedy high in the back did not exit from his throat and therefore could not have hit Connally. The throat wound, he suggests, was caused by a sliver of bone set flying by the bullets which struck the President's skull. (3) Again, on the basis of his close analysis of the Zapruder film, he argues that Governor Connally's motions prove he was struck in frame 238 by a second bullet, and, since it is so soon after the Kennedy hit, by a second gunman.

Now as it happens, and as I pointed out in my article, even the world-renowned Dr. Wecht abandoned the first two of these contentions after spending two days with the autopsy material. Here is what I wrote:

> Whole portions of Josiah Thompson's *Six Seconds in Dallas* must be discarded as worthless, for in matters of factual truth, momentary ingenuity and (apparently) passionate sincerity count for nothing. Professor Thompson, who worked closely with Dr. Wecht in preparing his book, has known for nearly three years that major portions of it must be discarded as baseless gossip, and so too has every student of the assassination. One recalls no public concessions of error.

And still there is no concession of error, even on the points on which Dr. Wecht has reversed himself. In

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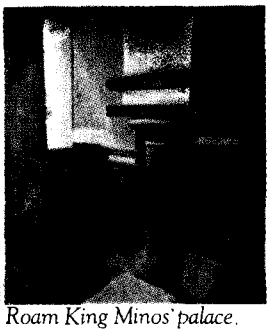

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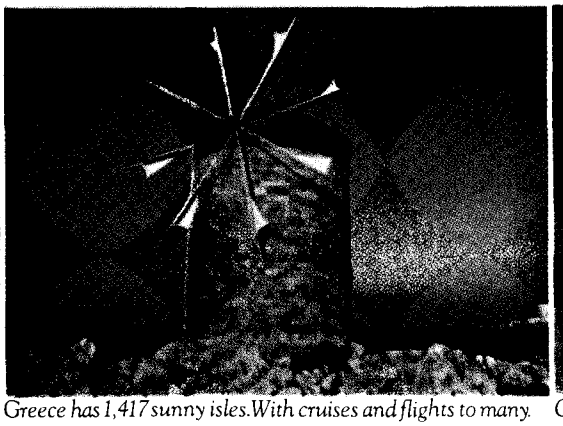

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a television debate with me in November, Mr. Thompson continued to argue for the frontal hit, which, as Dr. Wilber points out, has been abandoned by everyone who has seen the autopsy photographs and X-rays. It is inconceivable that the sharp hit from the right postulated by Mr. Thompson could have left no trace.

But even more remarkable than Mr. Thompson's silence on these salient points is his response to my argument that Governor Connally's position in frame 238 makes it impossible for him to have received all his five wounds at that point whereas Connally's position just after the Warren Commission says he was hit (as he emerges from behind the famous sign) is in consistent alignment. I am glad to have reaffirmation on this point from the Itek Corporation as reported by the CBS News Special on the assassination in late November, but a perusal of the relevant frames shows that the photographic expertise of that company was not needed. And this is not just a matter of me disagreeing with Mr. Thompson or him with me, that's a debating trick; it is a question of which of our versions agrees with historical reality. As I wrote:

> A bullet striking Connally when the critics say he was hit . . . would have had to exit from the chest [next to the right nipple, moving at a downward angle of 25 degrees in a right to left direction] . . . taken at least two sharp turns upward in mid-air —right and then left into the knuckle side of the wrist; and then, upon exiting on the palm side, further up in the air than the wound of entry, would have had to execute a very sharp U-turn [avoiding Connally's hat] into the thigh: plainly impossible.

To this Mr. Thompson replies only that he and others see it differently. The reader should not be misled into thinking that we are Hamlet and Polonius disagreeing over whether a cloud looks like a camel or a whale. The differences between us are not at all subtle. Does Mr. Thompson mean to suggest that in frame 238 Connally's arm is *below* the right nipple and over his left thigh? In what precise respects is my account of the impossible path a bullet would have to follow in frame 238 incorrect? Before such questions, which were all raised in my article, Mr. Thompson, who in his book counters medical testimony with painstaking analysis of the Zapruder film, remains mute, passing swiftly on to Doctors Shaw and Gregory.

Both testified in 1964 that Connally could have received his wounds in 238. Neither had studied the Zapruder films closely, and in my view both were wrong. Mr. Thompson quotes from Volume IV; one longs for his comment on Dr. Gregory's testimony in Volume VI, where he gives the bulk of his testimony on the Governor's position when struck. On page 101 we see Commission counsel, Arlen Specter, showing Dr. Gregory a diagram (No. 5) from the so-called Gregory Exhibit No. 1.

> *Mr. Specter*: Now, Dr. Gregory, I turn to Diagram No. 5 which depicts a seated man and what does Diagram No. 5 depict to your eye with respect to what action is described on the seated man?
> *Dr. Gregory*: Well, I should say that this composite has aligned the several parts of the body demonstrated in such a way that a single missile following a constant trajectory could have accounted for all of the wounds which are shown.

The seated man in Diagram No. 5 has his arm across his chest, the forearm below the right nipple and over the left thigh and is not at all like Governor Connally's position in frame 238.

Errors are human, and so too is the stubborn refusal to admit error or even to acknowledge difficulties in one's argument when they are demonstrated. But the latter qualities are less defensible in a scholar. Mr. Thompson is a civil man, and, as I learned, a most courteous debater. Perhaps my characterizations, applied to him, are too harsh. Still, on this performance I must say of him what I said of Dr. Wecht: "Anyone who has seen speculation after speculation about the assassination refuted and continues to proclaim his vast distrust of the Warren Commission's conclusions while hanging from this narrow thread is receiving inspiration from a source outside of this world and its evidences."

Itamar Salamon comments on what may be some of the psychological sources of such inspiration. He sees a need to deal with uncertainty and irrationality. I see that too (I shall quote from Mr. O'Toole in a moment), but add another need clearly perceptible in some cases: a need to create uncertainty and the appearance of irrationality. Othello may have been paranoid, Dr. Salamon, but Iago was not. I am sorry that he took my remarks to mean that I charged the critics with a desire to sell books or achieve personal notoriety. I am saying something quite different. I see political (and cultural) motives, as indeed I see political motives in Oswald, who also should not be reduced to his sub-psyche. History is filled with instances of deliberate distortions aiming at discrediting regimes; why is it so outrageous to suggest that this may be, in part, such an instance? The interested reader is directed to Fritz Tobias's account of the Communist party's outright fabrications in connection with the Reichstag fire, and instances could be cited from the Right as well. We have seen so much government deceit and cover-up in recent times, and we have called it by its true name—why then does it seem uncivil when someone suggests that the adversary culture has shown some of the same characteristics as its quarry? I agree with the critics who say we should not use psychological reductions to explain away assassins. I only add that we should not use the same reductions to explain away the critics or even part of their audience.

Finally, there is George O'Toole's high and mighty fury. I called Mr. O'Toole "fanciful" and said that in his book, *The Assassination Tapes* (Penthouse Press), he "rehearses lines of argument which he admits are far-fetched, as if to say: any event which can generate such heated comment, even plainly absurd comment, can't be completely clean." He challenges me to provide examples. Here is one. On pages 12-13 Mr. O'Toole recites a "seemingly endless chain of coincidences binding the assassinations of Presidents Lincoln and Kennedy."

> Both men were shot in the back of the head in the presence of their wives, on Friday, shortly after referring to the possibility of assassination. Neither man ever regained consciousness. Kennedy had a secretary named Lincoln, and Lincoln had a secretary named Kennedy. . . .

Commenting on these coincidences, Mr. O'Toole writes:

> While the coincidences between the Lincoln and Kennedy assassinations can have no deeper meaning, except perhaps that the laws of prob-

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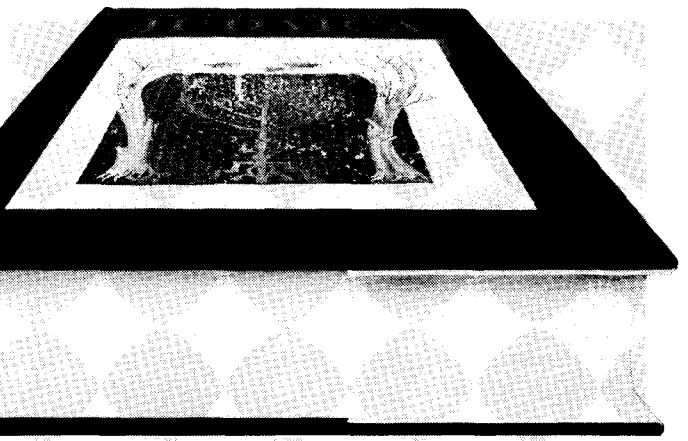

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ability were suspended in favor of some strange example of Jungian synchronicity, there are other unlikely juxtapositions of events surrounding the Dallas shooting, and these have given rise to dark suspicions.

He then mentions one George de Mohrenschildt, Russian-born, who was perhaps Oswald's closest friend after he returned from Russia. De Mohrenschildt, it seems, was in Guatemala on an alleged hiking trip with his wife during the Bay of Pigs invasion in Cuba and later gave a report on his trip to the U.S. government. "This probably means CIA," says O'Toole. Then the clincher:

> Such coincidences may seem implausible or suspicious, but consider this: Shortly after George de Mohrenschildt emigrated to the United States, he made the acquaintance of a family named Bouvier and their small daughter Jacqueline. A quarter of a century before he befriended the accused presidential assassin, de Mohrenschildt met John F. Kennedy's future wife and in-laws! That such circumstances are coincidental is almost beyond belief, but how else, in sanity, can they be explained?

I find this and most of the rest of Mr. O'Toole's book slightly moonstruck. I also find much of the criticism of the Warren Commission to be a form of intellectual pornography, creating cheap thrills with little real payoff. Perhaps I should not have bullied Mr. O'Toole with his appearance in *Penthouse* to make that point. But I hold to my general analysis and to my characterization of the criticism.

The New Egalitarians

To the Editor of Commentary:

In "Egalitarianism & International Politics" [September 1975], in the curious paragraph which introduces Section VIII, Robert W. Tucker admits that the new sensibility is just a new name for the long-standing issue of international distribution of income. If this is the case, it is not clear to me what is new about it, and I would argue that, with one exception, which Mr. Tucker mentions only indirectly, nothing of significance has happened in recent years.

Briefly, the "new consensus" is far older than Mr. Tucker would allow; when I studied economic development in 1956, we already had a textbook on the subject available to us. Gunnar Myrdal, whom Mr. Tucker quotes as an example of the "new consensus," developed his views in the middle 50's. If there has been any major change in the last twenty years, it has been that the views of these intellectuals have been taken much *less* seriously by policy-makers in the advanced countries. One need only look at the state of the U.S. foreign-aid program to confirm this.

Similarly, economists have been debating for an equally long period whether the export of primary commodities was retarding the economic development of less-developed countries. It was long ago suggested that . . . the prices of primary commodities were not rising sufficiently to offset the rising cost of manufactured imports. Moreover, the idea that . . . efforts should be made to correct this problem also has a long history. Specifically, proposals were advanced, and in some instances implemented, to prop up commodity prices.

This is not the place to attempt to sum up the complex debate on commodity prices. Suffice it to note that the statistical evidence for the alleged price trends is at best weak (a statement many of my colleagues would consider far too generous to the evidence) and that, as the monstrous perversities produced by the OPEC cartel dramatize, commodity cartels are poor instruments indeed to improve international income distribution.

It may be noted parenthetically that the Kennedy administration, frustrated by its inability to secure congressional support for direct foreign aid, became increasingly receptive to commodity price rigging, a policy that has since become a persistent theme of State Department thinking.

What is new, of course, is that the OPEC cartel has encouraged efforts by other less-developed countries to implement the theory that income distribution will be altered by additional commodity cartels. Whether the new cartels will succeed, and whether they will improve world income distribution, is still under considerable study, but the evidence to date suggests that the results may be quite unimpressive.

Richard L. Gordon
Pennsylvania State University
University Park, Pennsylvania

To the Editor of Commentary:

Robert W. Tucker . . . has not presented a convincing case for his conclusion that "we are moving . . . toward the time when governments and publics will regard humanitarian assistance . . . as a duty."

. . . Is it *really* credible that "governments and publics" in advanced industrial states will begin to feel so guilty for having mistreated weaker countries that they will reverse the entire thrust of their histories, giving open-handedly to deprived peoples and expecting nothing in return . . . except balm for their inflamed consciences?

It may be that Mr. Tucker doesn't really believe his own thesis. He takes care to note that there is "little evidence" supporting John P. Lewis's projection that "'planetary interests'" are gradually displacing "'parochial national interests,'" and elsewhere notes that "on more than one occasion hypocrisy has been the advance wave of new truth." Is it possible that the liberal philosophies he explores comprise this "wave of hypocrisy"—which just might be a camouflage, concealing the unheralded emergence of a new trade-off between rich and poor nations?

The treatment given "transfers of resources" is so abstract as to ignore the obvious fact that aid is a competitive weapon in the scramble for control over dwindling natural resources. Economic assistance is *represented* as "charity," but it has been used as an arm-twisting lever, not clearly distinguishable from bribery, to extract development concessions and trading advantages from weak governments of backward countries. In order to reduce international frictions, aid must be pooled—and this move toward multilateralizing economic assistance requires the creation of a World Development Authority under the auspices of the United Nations.

Indeed, if we examine the literature of the "doomsayers," we find that Robert Heilbroner's predictions of proliferating wars between rich and poor countries, as the competition for raw materials intensifies, are supported by . . . ecologists, environmentalists, agronomists, demographers, and other professional alarmists whose stock-in-trade is forecasting the decline of the planet. But if even a small fraction of those projections holds true, we are faced with a

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powerful argument for global planning—a field Mr. Tucker studiously ignores. . . .

Relations among nations are based not so much upon mutual assistance as reciprocal contract. So it is essential that the "welfare world" be built on much the same foundation that supported Bismarck's version of the welfare state: the rich assumed responsibility for the social security of the poor, which effectively defused possible insurrections within deprived strata of the citizenry. Much the same kind of trade-off may be adopted on a global scale. And it has nothing whatever to do with liberal "atonement" philosophy. It does not look backward, but ahead to the problems and aspirations of the future, when converging crises will dictate the need for a new world order . . . as a matter of mutual survival.

Once a viable trade-off is negotiated—and it might be based on expanded aid in exchange for host-country agreements to forgo seizing donors' assets . . . and holding raw-material prices down during planning cycles—it is entirely possible that liberal aims will be effectively served. . . .

For my part I have suggested a number of negotiating strategies designed to engineer the required trade-offs in my book, *Shaping a New World Order*, which is just entering its final revision. . . .

Mr. Tucker's article will be noted more for the issues it raises by *implication* than for the case he intended to present.

FRANK WALKE

New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Robert W. Tucker apparently glides over two points.

First, he seems to presume that force was the only factor resulting in maldistribution of wealth. But history records many other factors, including national resources, religion/tradition, and climate.

Second, he seems to accept the premise that the use of coercion always resulted in reduced wealth for the colonized. There is some evidence to the contrary, that in many instances colonization produced *increased* wealth for the colony, and that the colonial power may have earned only a reasonable return on its capital investment. I would presume that exploitation takes place, and leads to the notion of reparations, only when the colonial power has an excessive or unreasonable return on its capital, and when the colony is economically worse off for the experience. Exploitation may be a moral issue, with outraged history assuaged by current payment of damages, but one would find no historical basis for such payment, and no method of calculating the amount due.*

RICHARD LIGHT

Rochester, Michigan

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "Egalitarianism & International Politics," Robert W. Tucker . . . skirts rather uncharacteristically around the central issue, namely, who or what actually bears responsibility for the enduring poverty of many underdeveloped countries? There are simply too many instances of rapidly developing colonies, both present and former—Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Brazil, Indonesia, even Israel—to posit a history of colonialism or exploitation as a sufficient or general explanation of current economic stagnation. A careful examination of this matter would show, as P.T. Bauer has extensively documented,* that the key determinant of development or its lack is the type of economic management policies presently being pursued in these countries by their own governments, policies that in the economically torpid countries share one or more of the following characteristics: oppressive taxation, restrictive licensing, grave and incalculable risk of nationalization, antagonism to profits, and prejudice against economically successful minorities. Given conditions like these that are distinctly hostile to productive commercial activity by domestic as well as foreign entrepreneurs, it is no wonder that sustained improvement in living standards cannot take place. It is the accurate perception that resources transferred into such a climate would inevitably be wasted that explains why they are not already freely flowing into these countries.

It is pertinent to ask *why* these governments persist in such policies in the face not only of their clearly manifest, abiding failure, but also in view of the fact that advice on the sorts of change needed is plentifully available from economists and the international business community. A clue may be found in Mr. Tucker's astute observation that the beneficiaries of the "new egalitarianism" are not the citizenry as a whole but states—in other words, that elite within each country which runs and/or benefits from the state apparatus. What all of the economically sterile expedients listed above have in common is that ultimate control over business decisions is exercised by government officials, who thereby enjoy new opportunities, not merely for enhanced status but for enhanced bribe-taking as well. It follows that reducing the scope of such governmental hindrances, however economically sensible, would clearly be against the class interest of this elite. This no doubt accounts for the elite's tenacious pursuit of what are in fact growth-retarding measures. . . .

From this perspective, the main function of the "transfer of wealth" sought by the "new egalitarianism" is easily seen to be to benefit . . . the members of this class (what Mr. Tucker calls the state), both directly in that they are the ones who would first receive the wealth and determine how it was spent, thereby strengthening their political domination, and indirectly, in that the grinding poverty and consequent discontent which their economic management left to itself would produce would be—briefly—palliated. . . . Thus, what at first glance seems a quite paradoxical situation—namely, that war and its threat can be realistically, even blithely, contemplated as an acceptable means of gaining material assets for an underdeveloped nation, while a mere releasing . . . of the productive energies already inherent in its own citizens . . . cannot, it seems, be so contemplated—is quite logically explained by the analysis of vested interests here offered: it is simply the inevitable, appalling consequence of the puerile attempts of this unarguably exploitative class to maintain itself in power.

WILLIAM R. HAVENDER

Berkeley, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . The "new egalitarians" call for a new order "based on equity, sovereign equality, interdependence, common interest, and cooperation." For the smaller states, interdependence and cooperation are

*See P. T. Bauer's article, "Western Guilt & Third World Poverty," on p. 31 below—ED.

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crucial concerns in their own right. Only a few nations in the world can seriously consider attempting to be functionally self-sufficient. The United States is one, the Soviet Union is another. Canada, Brazil, Australia, and China may be the only others on the very short list. For the rest, including virtually all the underdeveloped countries, world trade and capital flows are economic necessities.

The fact that interdependence implies limits on sovereignty, however, is naturally underplayed by the developing states. These nations, in a manner typical of new converts, are the most orthodox believers in the virtues of sovereign power.

The best-known expression of sovereign "absolutism" is the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States. This document was intended to be a condemnation of "economic aggression" and in it the developing world rejects many of the traditional standards of international law. The Charter diverges from customary law most sharply on the issue of foreign investment. Here the sole jurisdiction of the host country is emphatically asserted. In the areas of trade and technology transfer, the Charter offers mostly generalizations, designed to establish the "duties" of the industrialized nations. . . .

Although the new egalitarians have sought to provide a set of "generally accepted norms to govern international economic relations," in effect they have torn down important parts of the prior framework of legal restraints on sovereign economic action without giving the world workable replacements. Consequently, at the time when nations are placing ever more reliance on other nations for their economic well-being, the normative standards are eroding.

Unilateral economic measures taken to maximize short-term domestic returns are usually contrary to the long-run interests of all parties. Without clear international legal rules, however, they may resemble rational defensive policies. Examples are not limited to the developing world. In recent years we have seen arbitrary violation of the terms of freely negotiated contracts, trade discrimination against strong competitors, imposition of export controls on scarce and needed commodities, controls on investments overseas, freezing of assets, and expropriations—only a sampling of the possibilities in a world of competitive economic sovereignty. These policies can injure the small and least-developed countries the most, imperiling the slow institutionalization of special economic measures for the poor, such as the proposed Development Security Fund, or generalized tariff preferences.

Members of the Third World are probably valid in criticizing traditional international law when they show that the law codifies an unequal relationship based on coercion. International investment law, especially the early precedents dating from the days of "dollar diplomacy" in Latin America, certainly had its coercive elements. But any new order must retain and expand the limits on unilateral economic actions, set standards for the treatment of foreigners, and provide trusted mechanisms for dispute settlement.

In my view, the developing world's search for a new egalitarianism, although utilizing sovereign economic and political power as leverage on the West (and taking advantage of the reluctance in the use of force which Mr. Tucker commented upon in "Oil: the Issue of American Intervention" [January 1975]), must soon include an expanded system of economic rules of behavior. To have any chance of general acceptance, this system must constrain both the Third World and the industrial countries in their use of sovereignty. Although Mr. Tucker's description of the nationalist orientation of the new egalitarian elite is accurate, the forces of interdependence, including the high economic cost of confrontation, could lead to the development of more stringent standards of law for the international economy, regardless of the outcome of the equity debate.

CHARLES RIES

Washington, D.C.

ROBERT W. TUCKER writes:

Richard L. Gordon complains that I ignore what professional economists have to say on the subject of my article. It is not that I have ignored the economists; I simply could not find the body of literature to which Mr. Gordon refers. During the 1950's, and even in the early 1960's, economists were uninterested in the problem of redistribution of income within the state. *A fortiori,* they were uninterested in the issue of interna-

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tional redistribution of income.

Of course, the game of playing "what's new" is always diverting. And since nothing under the sun is literally new, it is not a difficult game. Mr. Gordon selects Gunnar Myrdal to show that the "new political sensibility" is not new. But even if we take the case of Myrdal as evidence of a concern among Western economists with international inequalities of income, we need only amend the argument by saying the new sensibility arose in the 1950's rather than the 1960's. As such matters go, concern over international redistribution would still be new. In fact, Myrdal is one of the very few exceptions that establishes the point I wished to make, namely, that the new political sensibility arose in the 1960's and for all the reasons I mentioned. Indeed, its real momentum has become apparent only in the present decade.

Frank Walke writes that I have failed to make a "convincing case" that we are moving toward acceptance of humanitarian assistance as a duty. Perhaps so. The matter is admittedly inconclusive at this juncture. I spoke only of "solid indications" that we are moving "however tortuously" toward such acceptance. This is scarcely a ringing affirmation of faith. I, too, entertain doubts, though I do believe that attitudes are changing. Be that as it may, I cannot plead guilty to Mr. Walke's charge that such aid as may be rendered the poor will be regarded as reparations for past injustice. Quite the contrary, I was at pains to express my doubt that this could ever provide a promising—or, for that matter, desirable—rationale for assistance.

Mr. Walke asks whether it is "really credible" that publics and governments in the developed states will give "open-handedly" to the wretched of the earth for no reason other than to appease "inflamed consciences." Since the rich within domestic societies have never done so to their poor, the question can only be rhetorical when applied to international society. I do not suggest the contrary, as Mr. Walke appears to think. Instead, I argued that many among Western liberal elites suggest the contrary, and for reasons I tried to elaborate. It must be noted, though, that the new political sensibility is not without a very large dose of self-interest. Whether this calculation of self-interest is well-taken is another, and quite unresolved, question. At any rate, all of the arguments emphasizing self-interest assume essentially what Mr. Walke assumes, that mutually satisfactory global-scale trade-offs may, and can, be made. The question, then, is what these trade-offs might be, whether they can be made without undergoing first a good deal of tension and conflict, how they will affect the future global distribution of wealth and power, etc. Mr. Walke seems quite optimistic about these prospects. I remain skeptical about them—not apocalyptic, just skeptical.

I have no quarrel with Richard Light's observations. If I "glided" over his two points, it was in large measure because I took them largely for granted. Perhaps I should not have done so. He is obviously right in saying there is neither historical precedent for reparations claims resulting from colonialism nor feasible methods for calculating such claims. But this will not deter such claims from being made, however covert the forms in which they are often presented.

William R. Havender calls attention to the responsibility the governing elites in many of the poor states must bear for the enduring poverty of the peoples they govern—or misgovern. He is right to do so, though he might have noted the instances in which the sins of governing elites have been encouraged and supported by foreign interests that have benefited from misrule. I did indeed "skirt" this critical issue, in part because I remain uncertain about the weight that should be attached to the arguments Mr. Havender advances. Here, I can only make the following brief observations. The claims of the new egalitarianism are not only pushed by nations possessed of incompetent, or corrupt, elites. Many of these claims are also broadly supported by those states that have a rather impressive development record. It is therefore wrong to equate such claims with the governing elites Mr. Havender has singled out for criticism. Moreover, while it is true that responsibility for development, or the absence thereof, begins at home, it is also true—as we are constantly reminded—that the economies of underdeveloped countries are vulnerable to fluctuations in commodity prices. What should be done about this—and about other vulnerabilities—is something over which reasonable observers may differ, but it seems pointless to deny that there *is* a problem. Finally, I may be forgiven if I register skepticism over Mr. Havender's contention that the reason why there are no greater resource transfers to many poor states is that the rich countries appreciate that these transfers would be wasted. Surely there are other reasons, by now commonplace, which are more significant in accounting for the absence of a higher level of resource transfers from North to South.

Charles Ries quite properly observes that it is only to be expected that the new states should form the most orthodox of believers in the virtues of sovereign power. At the same time, he notes that the smaller and more vulnerable among them cannot seriously entertain a policy of economic self-sufficiency. Interdependence creates the need for order, and the greater the interdependence the greater the need. Yet the new states reject traditional standards of international law and practice since they view these standards as expressing the unequal relationships of a bygone era. All this is unexceptionable. What is not is Mr. Ries's assumption that the need for order which interdependence creates will lead to the development of a new and more comprehensive order, and this quite apart from the outcome of the equity debate. At times, it is true, he puts this assumption in the conditional mode. At times, however, he does not. Yet the assumption must be expressed in the conditional. We have no way of knowing whether interdependence will lead to order. It may well lead to chaos and this, particularly, if the equity debate does remain embittered and unresolved. Mr. Ries is right in saying that in the end men will place order before justice. But before reaching the end we may be in for a very difficult time.

Romance & the Novel

To the Editor of Commentary:

Hilton Kramer's persuasive review of *Ragtime* by E. L. Doctorow [Books in Review, October 1975] misappropriates the literary distinction between novel and romance. Mr. Kramer quotes Richard Chase's *The American Novel*

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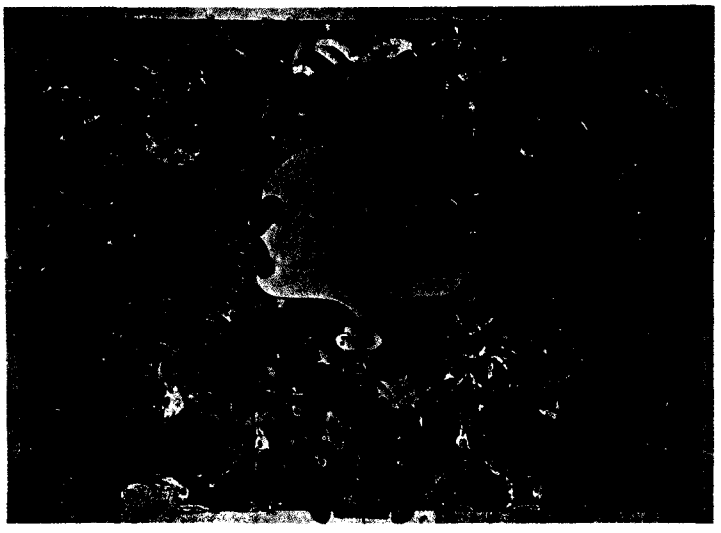

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and Its Tradition at length to establish that *Ragtime* is a romance. As in Chase's definition, *Ragtime* has "simple . . . and purely emblematic characters," little "intricacy of relation" among them, and a plot lacking in "realistic plausibility." Undoubtedly this makes it a romance. Where Mr. Kramer goes wrong is to suppose that the romance, because of its attitude to reality, is a form deserving our contempt.

In Richard Chase's book the central "tradition" of the American novel is this same romance. Chase argues that "in the very freedom of romance from the conditions of actuality there are certain potential virtues of the mind, which may be suggested by such words as rapidity, irony, abstraction, profundity. These qualities have made romance a suitable, even, as it seems, an inevitable, vehicle for the intellectual and moral ideas of the American novelists." And Chase goes on to argue that "the usual depreciation of romance on intellectual and moral grounds is not always justifiable."

Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance* fits Chase's definition as well as *Ragtime*, but the earlier novel comes to quite different conclusions about women, progress, and the nature of American society. Thus a novel's form has nothing to do with its ideas, nor, it may be added, with fidelity to or distortion of human truth.

Mr. Kramer calls Doctorow's characters cartoon-like, and he complains that Doctorow "plays so fast and loose with historical personalities that what Chase called 'resistance from reality' is virtually nil." However, rather than making *Ragtime* more of a romance its unacceptable exaggerations must be said to make it a flawed one. The 19th-century term to explain the distinction was "verisimilitude." The romancer—Sir Walter Scott or James Fenimore Cooper—might depart from reality but he had the responsibility to maintain an essential truth—verisimilitude. Henry James agreed. He criticized his early novel *The American* not for being a romance, which he said it was, but for violating the reader's sense of "the way things happen."

When Mr. Kramer says that "*Ragtime* . . . distorts the actual materials of history with a fierce ideological arrogance," he is objecting not to romance but to the author's ideas—and his skill.

PETER SHAW
New York City

Poverty in America

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Stanley Lebergott's essay, "How to Increase Poverty" [October 1975], is remarkably naive and simplistic and hardly scratches the surface of the subject he is attempting to tackle. Confusion and contradiction are rampant. His underlying premise is that poverty in this country is not poverty at all, but a relative deficiency of material things whose need is determined by the profit-motivated advertising industry of Madison Avenue. Granted that in the current system industry and big business create the demand as well as satisfy the supply of most of the superfluous things that we now regard as necessities and promote the concept that more is better. But surely Mr. Lebergott is aware that true poverty and real starvation do indeed exist here in the United States, and it is not just a matter of black and white vs. color TV, and used vs. new cars.

Furthermore, if poverty in this country is not poverty at all, shouldn't Mr. Lebergott be more concerned with the need to educate the populace about this fact, rather than directing his attention to methods of equalizing social status and material possessions? And why is he concerned at all about the absence of a desire on the part of most Americans to abolish poverty, if . . . it doesn't really exist? . . .

Mr. Lebergott's solution to this relative or "imagined" poverty in the U.S. is to force the elderly to work as long as they are physically able, and to live with their offspring whether they want to or not until they die, dispense with medical care for the poor, pile them into small apartments, and send their children back to the mines. This is a most modest proposal, reminiscent of Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Poor People from Being a Burden to Their Parents or Country and for Making Them Beneficial to the Public." Unfortunately, it is devoid of Swift's insight and sense of humor, and contains no serious ameliorative suggestions about how to combat poverty.

[DR.] DAVID SHANDER
Denver, Colorado

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TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I was dismayed to read "How to Increase Poverty" by Stanley Lebergott . . . which I found both cynical and biased. . . . According to Mr. Lebergott, we have already reduced the percentage of American families living in poverty (relatively defined according to OEO figures of $4,275 as a poverty level in terms of 1972 prices) from 56 per cent in 1936 to 10 per cent. . . . But 1936 was a depression year with 14-20 per-cent unemployment (U.S. Department of Labor statistics) and the subsequent reduction in unemployment was due primarily to conditions brought about by World War II. . . . Today, in spite of our trillion-dollar GNP, we have not reduced the number of families living in poverty below the 10 per-cent figure cited by Mr. Lebergott. . . . Moreover, this figure would probably have to be revised upward in the light of the current recession.

More important, however, is the fact that Mr. Lebergott fails to break down this 10 per cent into categories with much higher levels of poverty: blacks (33.6 per cent), the aged (24.6 per cent), and children (15 per cent), according to a Bureau of the Census study done in 1970. Also, as Professor Bradley R. Schiller of the University of Maryland has pointed out in his book, *The Economics of Poverty and Discrimination*, the income of the typical American poor family in 1970 was only $2,900.

I think it is irrelevant to compare current consumption standards with those of 1900 as Mr. Lebergott does to prove that today's poverty is relative rather than absolute and far above subsistence level. Certainly we have progressed since 1900 and become a more affluent society so that even the poor have products that did not exist or would have been luxuries decades ago. But when Mr. Lebergott complains that 41 per cent of Americans below the poverty level own and drive automobiles, he does not take account of the fact that with long distances to travel and in the absence of mass transportation (particularly in rural areas), cars are a necessity for the working poor to get to their jobs, go shopping, etc. (No longer can they have goods delivered as in the good old days.) In addition, he does not mention how many poor people driving such cars "owe" them to those who finance their sales at high rates of interest and ultimately repossess them. The same holds true for TV's and other so-called luxuries to which Mr. Lebergott refers (see David Caplovitz's *The Poor Pay More*).

As for Mr. Lebergott's arguments against social security and pension plans which pay old people not to work, the social-security system . . . was designed to provide retirement benefits and is primarily an insurance rather than a welfare system. . . . While I would agree that pension plans and social security may cause or encourage early retirement and this may be unjust to those who want to continue working, there are just so many jobs to go around. It is not fair to the young if they cannot get jobs because of the seniority of older workers. Also . . . what percentage of older workers could actually continue to work full time?

I agree with Mr. Lebergott that the welfare system (particularly in regard to the Aid-to-Dependent-Children program as it now stands) encourages the breakup of families headed by males and needs to be revised. We also should encourage those on welfare to look for jobs . . . which could be accomplished by the right kind of negative income tax. . . . But there are some qualifications to Mr. Lebergott's ideas even here. Welfare benefits vary greatly from state to state, and in such states as Mississippi and much of the South benefits are so low that even without "male desertion" many would be living below the poverty line.

As for his contention that large families create poverty, a contrary argument is made by Professor Schiller in his previously cited work that in large families some of the older children may work, thus actually increasing income.

The views of many economists run counter to Mr. Lebergott's thesis. For instance, the theory of the dual labor market advances the concept of a primary and a secondary labor market. The workers in the latter group (due to lack of skills and education, or discrimination) are unable to move to better-paying jobs regardless of the state of the economy.

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Along similar lines there is the concept of the culture of poverty, originated by . . . Oscar Lewis. Lewis maintains that styles of life among certain poor ethnic groups . . . constitute a separate and distinct culture whose members have values different from the rest of society. This culture of poverty tends to perpetuate itself from generation to generation. . . .

To sum up, if we consider welfare, food-stamp programs, Medicaid, and all the other ingredients that make income maintenance the largest single item in our federal budget (and, aside from education, in state budgets as well), it would seem that the poor are a long way from emerging from poverty, nor would they be much better off if the methods of creating poverty discussed by Mr. Lebergott were done away with.

Unfortunately, our many poverty programs (apart from manpower training and educational programs . . .) limit us to the relief of those in poverty rather than to the elimination of the conditions which cause it. The cost of such programs is high and going higher, and unless more fundamental measures are taken to turn the economy around, thus diminishing the need for welfare, the world's most affluent nation, already facing a $70-billion federal deficit, may . . . succumb to bankruptcy just as its largest city is now doing.

GERSON G. EISENBERG
Baltimore, Maryland

STANLEY LEBERGOTT writes:

It would be fascinating to know what David Shander would think of my article if he had read it. To some extent both he and Gerson G. Eisenberg remind me of an old friend who once slugged his internist. The doctor had told him that rare old brandy, which he loved, led to cirrhosis of the liver.

I outlined seven factors that increased relative poverty in the U.S. I commended none. Nor did I "criticize" them, as both writers rather indignantly assert. I described some of their consequences in creating poverty. Both gentlemen can still continue to applaud social security, large families, Madison Avenue, children not working, etc.

Mr. Eisenberg commends me—for things I never said. He attacks—for reasons that actually support my position. To note a few examples. (1) He "would agree with the author that the welfare system . . . *encourages* the break-up of male-headed families and needs revision." The article, however, said nothing about the welfare system, nothing about ADC, nothing about their impact. (2) He discovers "a contention about large families creating poverty" and offers "a contrary argument"—which is that in large families "some of the children may work, thus actually increasing income." I had stated that "as the number of children per family increases from two to nine or more the proportion of families in poverty rises from 9 to 40 per cent." His rebuttal therefore accepts my conclusion, goes on to add that the rise in large families would be still greater if the children did not go to work. (3) He finds that "comparing [consumption standards] of today with 1900 . . . is irrelevant," that it is necessary for the working poor to have cars today. Which means he accepts a relative standard—admits that it keeps an ever retreating goal before us. (However, his history, in which the poor "have goods delivered as in the good old days," is one that is hard to recognize. In those days the poor had hardly anything "delivered." In rural areas they walked for miles to a tiny store; in dense urban areas they sent the kids out to the store.)

As for Dr. Shander, I am tempted to agree that "confusion and contradiction are rampant" (though they probably are couchant). He believes that my "underlying premise is that poverty in this country is not poverty at all, but a relative deficiency. . . ." Not *my* premise—but rather the one that underlies the OEO definition, Harrington's analysis, and, I believe, the position held by most Americans. I did, in fact, refer to the other poverty—"the coarse untidy kind that leads to agony, starvation, and to death." And I did suggest that we had the wherewithal to cut poverty "down to 1 per cent by next Sunday" if we wished.

Out of Context

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I hate to belabor a point, but I thought I ought to respond to the exchange of letters in the November 1975 issue between Robert Alter and John Cuddihy, an exchange centering on Mr. Alter's disapproving article on Mr. Cuddihy's book, *The Ordeal of Civility* ["Manners and the Jewish Intellectual," August 1975]. Readers will recall that Mr. Alter criticized Mr. Cuddihy for the varieties of sin falling under the rubric of sociological reduction. Mr. Cuddihy's response was to argue that Mr. Alter had grossly misunderstood the book, failed to see that it was made out of "words" not "ideas," and generally misconstrued the nature of his intellectual adventure. Mr. Cuddihy went on to quote and allude to my favorable review of the book in *Salmagundi*.

Now, Mr. Cuddihy does not misquote me, but he certainly distorts the context of the quotes. I did indeed once say the book was "marvelous." I also argued that it could best be appreciated for the adventurousness and exhilaration of its language and speculation. But even in this favorable review I did note that the book at least invoked the serious question of reductionism, and I made a number of smaller criticisms about the lack of rigor in Mr. Cuddihy's specific applications. The main point is that Mr. Cuddihy says I "fell down in adoration" before his book. This is absurd. I last did that before *The Brothers Karamazov* when I was sixteen. I frankly think the truth of the book lies somewhere in between Mr. Alter's and Mr. Cuddihy's views of it.

ROBERT WEISBERG
Skidmore College
Saratoga Springs, New York

Correction

A typographical error occurred in Josiah Lee Auspitz's reply to his critics in the December 1975 issue [Letters from Readers]. On page 25, lines 21-22, the phrase "it is a very plausible possibility" should have read "it is a very implausible possibility."

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Helsinki and Human Rights

"I am convinced that for every person in the West the demand for a general amnesty, for the guarantees of the rights of man and for freedom of expression in the USSR is not only a matter of conscience, but is also the safeguard of his own and his children's future. Now after the Helsinki Conference such demands are particularly opportune."

Andrei Sakharov, October 17, 1975

The document which 35 nations, including the United States, signed on August 1st at the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) contained significant human rights provisions calling for the freer flow of ideas and information between East and West. If all the participating countries adhered to these provisions, which would end the enforced isolation of the countries ruled by Communist regimes, the chances for a genuine detente and world peace would be greatly enhanced. Unfortunately, the Soviet Union and its allies have to date given clear indication that they do not *intend to abide by the human rights provisions of the Helsinki accord*, thus tragically confirming Alexander Solzhenitsyn's characterization of Helsinki as "the funeral of Eastern Europe."

Soviet Communist Party chief Brezhnev declared at the Helsinki conference that "Our common and most important task is to give full effect to these agreements. We assume that all countries represented at the conference will implement the agreements reached. As to the Soviet Union, it will act precisely in this way." Yet this pledge has already been violated in many ways:

- **Speaking to an American Congressional delegation on August 15th, Brezhnev said that the human rights provisions of the Helsinki accord were not "of a binding nature" and would only be "fulfilled according to agreement on the part of the states," that is, after additional bilateral negotiations.**
- **On August 7th, Erich Honecker, the head of the East German Communist Party, publicly refused to ease his country's travel restrictions. He observed that for East Germany "security is and remains foremost," but made no attempt to show that security required these very onerous restrictions.**
- **On September 22nd a Soviet Foreign Ministry official declared that the Soviet Union would not permit the circulation of Western publications with ideas "contradictory to Soviet legislation and to the morality of Soviet society." He asked rhetorically: "Is there really anyone in the West who seriously hopes that the socialist countries will sometime allow the 'free circulation' of such 'information' in their society?" The free circulation of Communist ideas is unhampered in the democratic countries of the West.**
- **Czechoslovakia was one of the countries which pledged at Helsinki to "respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought." Yet Czech intellectuals have been purged from their jobs and have had their books and manuscripts confiscated by the state. According to Dr. Vilem Precan, a distinguished Czech historian, intellectuals are "treated worse than notorious thieves and violent criminals in other countries."**
- **In isolated cases and only after great international pressure, the Soviet Union has agreed to reunite a family, or permit a marriage between citizens of different states, or to grant multiple entry-exit visas to journalists. In general, all the old restrictions prevail.**
- **The emigration of Jews from the Soviet Union has been slowed to one-half the rate of 1974 and one-third the rate of 1973. Helsinki has not altered this negative trend.**

The Soviet Union has chosen to interpret the Helsinki agreement in an arbitrary fashion. It has yielded little or nothing to liberal world *opinion. Far from allowing the freer movement of people and ideas, it* has taken steps to prevent what KGB chief Yuri V. Andropov has called "ideological sabotage" from the West. It has blatantly applied a double standard in interpreting that section of the accord it regards as "binding" — the part dealing with noninterference in the affairs of other states. It has denounced West Europeans for withholding economic aid from Portugal pending assurances that the will of the people would be respected. Yet it has intervened extensively in Portugal and has declared its "massive solidarity" with the Portuguese Communists who have systematically tried to subvert democracy in that country.

One of the dangers of the Helsinki "agreement" was that it might create the *illusion* of security *in the West and foster unrealistic hopes* for more open relations with the East. Sadly, it has become apparent that Europe is no more secure after Helsinki than before, and that the peoples of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union remain isolated and cut off from any genuine contact with the West. Such contact must remain a prime objective of American policy. But it will not be achieved by agreements which exchange the tangible recognition of Soviet domination over peoples for the intangible hope that the Russians will someday deal more humanely with their subjects. The West should not give concessions to Moscow, whether political or economic, without firm and "binding" guarantees that Moscow will give some*thing in return.

Since this statement was drafted, the Soviet authorities have denied Andrei Sakharov the right to travel to Oslo, Norway, to accept the Nobel Peace Prize. This is the most blatant violation to date of the spirit of the Helsinki accord.

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Western Guilt & Third World Poverty

P. T. Bauer

Come, fix upon me that accusing eye.
I thirst for accusation.
—W. B. Yeats

I

THE feeling of guilt has aptly been termed one of America's few remaining surplus commodities. Ubiquitous and repeated allegations that the West is responsible for the poverty of the so-called Third World both reflect and strengthen this feeling of guilt. Yet while such allegations have come to be widely accepted, often as axiomatic, they are not only untrue, but more nearly the opposite of the truth. Their acceptance has nevertheless paralyzed Western diplomacy, both toward the Soviet bloc and toward the Third World, where the West has abased itself before groups of countries which have negligible resources and no real power.

The feeling of guilt toward the Third World has been reinforced by political, emotional, and financial interests. It often goes together with condescension and contempt toward the people of the Third World. On the other hand, it is unaccompanied by a sense of responsibility for the results of the policies it itself inspires—policies which have ironically obstructed development in the Third World, and have contributed to intense and widespread suffering in many parts of it.

Allegations of Western responsibility are usually expressed vaguely and their ostensible grounds shift. But the general thrust is unequivocal. It is a persistent theme in the United Nations and its numerous affiliates. It is expressed virulently by spokesmen from the Third World and the Communist bloc, and is often endorsed by representatives of the West, especially of the United States. It is sounded continually in the universities, in the churches, and in the media.

Peter Townsend, for example, perhaps the most prominent British writer on poverty, asserts in his much-acclaimed book, *The Concept of Poverty*:

> I argued that the poverty of deprived nations is comprehensible only if we attribute it substantially to the existence of a system of international social stratification, a hierarchy of societies with vastly different resources in which the wealth of some is linked historically and contemporaneously to the poverty of others. This system operated crudely in the era of colonial domination, and continues to operate today, though more subtly, through systems of trade, education, political relations, military alliances, and industrial corporations.

So too, the late Paul A. Baran of Stanford argues in another widely-used text, *The Political Economy of Growth*:

> To the dead weight of stagnation characteristic of pre-industrial society was added the entire restrictive impact of monopoly capitalism. The economic surplus appropriated in lavish amounts by monopolistic concerns in backward countries is not employed for productive purposes. It is neither plowed back into their own enterprises nor does it serve to develop others.

And finally—though of course examples could easily be multiplied*—we have the late Dr. Nkrumah, Prime Minister and President of Ghana, perhaps one of the most influential African politicians since World War II, who declares in *Africa Must Unite*:

> Thus all the imperialists, without exception, evolved the means, their colonial policies, to satisfy the ends, the exploitation of the subject territories, for the aggrandizement of the metropolitan countries. They were all rapacious; they all subserved the needs of the subject lands to their own demands; they all circumscribed human rights and liberties; they all repressed and despoiled, degraded and oppressed. They took our lands, our lives, our resources and our dignity. Without exception, they left us nothing but our resentment. It was when they had gone

P. T. BAUER is professor of economics (with special reference to the economic development of underdeveloped countries) at the London School of Economics. His books include *Economic Analysis and Policy in Underdeveloped Countries; Indian Economic Policy and Development*; and (with B. S. Yamey) *The Economics of Underdeveloped Countries* and *Markets, Market Control, and Marketing Reform.*

* Several remarkable ones were cited by Daniel P. Moynihan in his celebrated COMMENTARY article, "The United States in Opposition" (March 1975).

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and we were faced with the stark realities, as in Ghana on the morrow of our independence, that the destitution of the land after long years of colonial rule was brought sharply home to us.

All these allegations are either misleading or untrue. Thus Professor Townsend cannot be right in saying that the backwardness of poor countries is explicable only in terms of an international social stratification or of colonial domination: the poorest and most backward countries have until recently had no external economic contacts and often have never been Western colonies. Baran's statement is again obviously and wholly untrue since throughout the Third World large agricultural, commercial, and industrial complexes have been built up through profits reinvested locally. Nor does Nkrumah's statement bear much relation to reality. For example, before colonial rule there was not a single cocoa tree in the Gold Coast (Ghana); when colonial rule ended, cocoa exports, entirely from African-owned and operated farms, totaled hundreds of thousands of tons annually—and this was the case with external trade in general.

II

So far from the West having caused the poverty of the Third World, contact with the West has been the principal agent of material progress there. Indeed, the very idea of material progress is Western, especially in the sense of a constant and steadily increasing control over man's environment. People in the Third World did not think in these terms until the arrival of Western man. The materially most advanced societies and regions of the Third World are those with which the West established the most numerous, diversified, and extensive contacts: the cash-crop-producing areas and *entrepôt* ports of Southeast Asia, West Africa, and Latin America; the mineral-producing areas of Africa and the Middle East; and cities and ports throughout Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America. The level of material achievement usually diminishes as one moves away from the foci of Western impact: the poorest and most backward are the populations with few or no external contacts, the aborigines being the limiting case.

All this is neither new nor surprising, since the spread of material progress from more to less advanced regions is familiar from economic history. The West was far ahead of the present Third World when it established contact with these regions in recent centuries. It was through these contacts that human and material resources, skills, capital, and new ideas—including the idea of material progress itself—flowed from the West to the Third World.

This process is especially evident in Black Africa. All the foundations and ingredients of modern social and economic life present there today were brought by Westerners, almost entirely during the colonial era. This is true of such fundamentals as public security and law and order; wheeled traffic (sub-Saharan Africa never invented the wheel); mechanized transport (transport powered by steam or gasoline instead of muscle—almost entirely human muscle in Black Africa); roads, railways, and man-made ports; modern forms of money (instead of barter or commodity money, such as cowrie shells, iron bars, or bottles of gin); the application of science and technology to economic activity; towns with substantial buildings, water, and sewerage; public health and hospitals and the control of endemic and epidemic diseases; and formal education.*

In short, over the last hundred years or so, contact with the West has transformed large parts of the Third World for the better. Southeast Asia and West Africa provide well-documented examples. For instance, in the 1890's Malaya was a sparsely populated area of hamlets and fishing villages. By the 1930's it had become a country with populous cities, thriving commerce, and an excellent system of roads, primarily thanks to the rubber industry brought there and developed by the British. Again, before the 1890's there was no cocoa production in what is now Ghana and Nigeria, no exports of peanuts or cotton, and relatively small exports of palm oil and palm kernels. These are by now staples of world commerce, all produced by Africans, but originally made possible by European activities. Imports, both of capital goods and of mass consumer goods designed for African use, also rose from negligible amounts at the end of the 19th century to huge volumes by the 1950's. These far-reaching changes are reflected in statistics of government revenues, literacy rates, school attendance, public health, infant mortality, and many other indicators, such as the ownership of automobiles and other consumer durables.

Western activities—supplemented at times by the activities of non-Western immigrants, notably Chinese, Indians, and Levantines, whose large-scale migration was, however, made possible by Western initiative—have thus led to major improvements in the material conditions of life in many parts of the Third World. This is not to suggest that there has been significant material

* On the other hand, of course, there was the Atlantic slave trade. But horrible and destructive as this trade was, it cannot legitimately be claimed as a cause of African backwardness. Indeed, the slave trade to what is now the Middle East began before the Atlantic slave trade and far outlasted it. (It was also even more brutal because the young males were usually castrated, often with fatal results.) And as it happens, the most backward parts of the continent, such as the interior of Central and Southern Africa and most of East Africa, were relatively unaffected by Western slavery, while the currently most advanced areas, notably West Africa, were much affected by it. (Asia was of course altogether untouched.)

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progress everywhere in the Third World. Over large areas there have been few contacts with the West. And even where such contacts have been established, the personal, social, and political determinants of economic performance have often proved unfavorable to material advance. But wherever local conditions permitted, contact with the West most often resulted in the elimination of the worst epidemic and endemic diseases, the mitigation or disappearance of famines, and a general improvement in the material standard of living for all.

III

MANY of the assertions concerning Western responsibility for poverty in the Third World express or reflect the belief that the prosperity of relatively well-to-do persons, groups, and societies is always achieved at the expense of the less well-off—i.e., that incomes are not generated by those who earn them, but are somehow extracted from others, so that economic activity is akin to a zero-sum game, in which the gains of some are always balanced by the losses of others. In fact, incomes (other than subsidies) are earned by the recipients for resources and services supplied, and are not acquired by depriving others of what they had.

The notion that incomes are extracted rather than earned has been among the most disastrous of popular economic misconceptions or delusions. It has, however, served the purposes of those who expect to benefit from the maltreatment of other people—through, for example, the expropriation or even destruction of relatively prosperous minorities. The notion has been used by medieval rulers and modern demagogues alike, and their victims range from medieval Jewish communities to the ethnic minorities of contemporary Asia and Africa. In Asia and Africa it is widely regarded as axiomatic that poverty reflects exploitation by foreigners, including ethnic minorities who have risen from poverty to prosperity. This belief is encouraged assiduously by local politicians, especially those who promised that political independence under their auspices would herald material prosperity, and is often propagated as well by other influential local groups who also expect to benefit from policies inspired by these ideas.

In recent decades the effectiveness of the notion that incomes are extracted rather than generated has been extended and reinforced by two streams of influence whose operation in this area has been cumulative. The first is Marxist-Leninist ideology, and the second is the spurious belief that the capacities and motivations of people are the same the world over.

In Marxist-Leninist ideology any return on private capital implies exploitation, and service industries are regarded as unproductive. Thus, earnings of foreign capital and the incomes of foreigners or ethnic minorities in the service industries become forms of exploitation. Further, neo-Marxist literature has extended the concept of the proletariat—which in this scheme of things is poor because it is exploited—to the peoples of the Third World (most of whom are in fact small-scale cultivators).

The notion that all individuals and societies are basically alike has also promoted the belief that Western prosperity has been achieved at the expense of the Third World. For if human aptitudes and motivations are substantially the same everywhere and yet some societies are richer than others, then the more prosperous must have oppressed and exploited the rest.

IV

BUT if the idea that incomes and property are extracted rather than earned is the principal assumption behind the notion of Western responsibility, a number of more specific contentions and suggestions are also heard. Most of these are in effect variants or derivations of the main theme, geared to particular audiences. Perhaps the leading such variant is the argument that the poverty of Asia and Africa can be attributed to colonialism. This idea is axiomatic in much of the Third World and in publications of the UN and its affiliates, and it has great appeal in the United States.

According to General Principle XIV of the first United Nations Conference for Trade and Development (UNCTAD): "The liquidation of the remnants of colonialism in all its forms is a necessary condition of economic development." This passage (which would not have been acceptable to Marx) reflects the Leninist doctrine under which colonialism is by definition exploitative. Leninist doctrine is reflected also in the phrase, "colonialism in all its forms"—a covert reference to foreign investment, which in Leninist ideology is itself a species of external exploitation.

Whatever one thinks of colonialism, however, it is certainly not incompatible with economic development. Some of the richest countries were formerly colonies and were even as colonies already very prosperous (North America, Australasia). As I have already stressed, many of the African and Asian colonies of the European powers progressed very rapidly during colonial rule, usually much more so than the independent countries in the same area. And at present one of the few remaining European colonies is Hong Kong. Conversely, some of the materially most backward countries in the world never were colonies (Afghanistan, Tibet, Nepal, Liberia). Ethiopia is perhaps an even more telling example, though it was an Italian colony for a very brief period (six years) in its long history.

The manifest untruth that colonial status must

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imply poverty, stagnation, and exploitation is sometimes camouflaged by suggestions that without colonialism the peoples of the colonial territories would have created nation states, or developed their own industries, or undertaken economic planning. Yet it is purely fanciful to imagine that such policies would or could have been pursued by the tribal chiefs or local rajahs or sultans who were replaced by colonial governments. And even if they had, such policies would not necessarily have made for progress. Indeed, state subsidies to particular activities or centralized control of economic activity are more likely to perpetuate poverty than to relieve it.

The terms economic colonialism and neocolonialism have sprung up recently to describe almost any form of economic relation between relatively rich and poor countries, regions, or groups. This terminology confuses poverty with colonial status, a concept which has always been understood to mean lack of political sovereignty. Since the late 1960's, the usage has been extended to cover the activities of multinational corporations in the Third World. In fact, these activities have promoted progress in poor countries by expanding opportunities and raising incomes and government revenues. Thus not only does the new terminology reflect a debasement of language; it also distorts the truth.

The decline of particular economic activities —e.g., the Indian textile industry of the 18th century—as a result of competition from cheap imports is sometimes instanced as an example of Western responsibility. This argument identifies the decline of one activity with the decline of the economy as a whole. But except under most peculiar conditions, rarely specified in this context, cheap imports extend the range of choice and of economic opportunities of people in poor countries. These imports are usually accompanied by the development and expansion of other activities: if this were not so, the population would be unable to pay.

V

According to another set of allegations, the West damages the Third World by manipulating the terms of trade so that these are unfavorable to the latter and also deteriorate persistently. This is alleged to have contributed to a decline in the share of the Third World in international trade. A related form of damage is said to be the indebtedness inflicted on the Third World by the West. These allegations are again fictitious, untrue, or irrelevant.

To begin with, the diversity of trading patterns within the Third World renders the aggregation of their terms of trade largely meaningless because the terms of trade of particular Third World countries and groups can move differently and even in opposite directions (the experience of the OPEC countries against other Third World countries is only a recent and familiar example). And over very short periods, changes in the terms of trade as conventionally measured are of little welfare significance without reference to changes in the cost of production of exports, the range and quality of imports, and the volume of trade.

Insofar as changes in the terms of trade do affect development and welfare, what matters is the amount of imports which can be purchased with a unit of domestic resources, and this cannot be inferred from the ratio of import and export prices. (In technical language, the comparisons relevant to economic welfare and development are the factoral terms of trade and not the crude commodity terms.) Further, expressions such as unfavorable terms of trade are meaningless except by reference to a base period. In recent decades, however, even the crude commodity terms of trade of Third World countries have been exceptionally favorable. When changes in the cost of production, the great improvement in the range and quality of imports, and the huge increase in the volume of trade are taken into account, the external purchasing power of the exports of the Third World in the aggregate is now very favorable, probably more so than ever before. This in turn has made it easier for governments to retain a larger proportion of export earnings through major increases in royalty rates, export taxes, and corporation taxes.*

But the terms of trade are in any case irrelevant to the basic causes of Third World poverty. This is obvious, for instance, from the material backwardness of societies and countries with little or no external trade. Changes in the share of the Third World in international trade are also irrelevant to its poverty. A reduction in the share of a country or group of countries in global trade has by itself no adverse economic implications because it often reflects the expansion of economic activity and trade elsewhere, which normally does not damage but benefits those whose relative share has declined. For instance, since the 1950's the large increase in the foreign trade of Japan, the reconstruction of Europe, and the liberalization of intra-European trade have brought about a decline in the share of other groups in world trade, including that of the United States and the United Kingdom. Furthermore, domestic developments and policies unre-

* Although these observations differ radically from the ideas reaching the public in the West, they should not come as a surprise. Some years ago, Sir Arthur Lewis noted in an important address that in the 1950's the terms of trade of primary producers were more favorable than at any time in the preceding eighty years (cf. "A Review of Economic Development," *American Economic Review*, May 1965). Sir Arthur wrote before the subsequent upsurge in the prices of primary products and without reference to the favorable factors noted in the text. The exporters of primary products are far from the same as Third World exporters, but they are often identified in discussions of Third World poverty.

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lated to external circumstances—such as increased domestic use of previously exported products, or domestic inflation, or special taxation of exporters, or the intensification of protectionist policies—frequently reduce the share of a country or group of countries in world trade. (As an aside, I may note that in recent decades the share of the Third World in total world trade has increased and not decreased, notably so since before World War I.)

So far as indebtedness is concerned, the external debts of the Third World reflect resources supplied to it. Indeed, the bulk of the current indebtedness of Third World governments consists of soft loans, often very soft loans, under various aid agreements, frequently supplemented by outright grants. With the worldwide rise in prices, including those of exports of Third World countries, the cost even of these soft loans has diminished greatly. If governments cannot service such soft loans, this reflects either wasteful use of the capital supplied, or inappropriate monetary or fiscal policies. It is worth remembering that in the course of their development many rich countries relied extensively on external loans, and hard loans at that.

Nor do persistent deficits in the balance of payments of many Third World countries mean that they are being impoverished by the West. Such deficits are inevitable if the government of a country, whether rich or poor, advancing or stagnating, lives beyond its resources and pursues inflationary policies while attempting to maintain overvalued exchange rates.

It is paradoxical to suggest that external economic relations are damaging to development. They normally benefit people by opening up markets for exports, and by providing a large and diverse source of imports, besides acting as channels for the flow of human and financial resources and for new ideas, methods, and crops. Because of the vast expansion of world trade in recent decades and the development of technology in the West, the material advantages from external contacts are now greater than ever before. The suggestion that these relations are detrimental is not only unfounded but also damaging, because it serves as a specious justification for official restrictions on their volume or diversity.

VI

Yet another batch of arguments holds that the mere presence of the West and the day-to-day activities of its peoples are in themselves harmful to the Third World. One form of such damage is said to derive from the so-called international demonstration effect, brought about by the new availability of cheap consumer goods supplied by the West. This availability supposedly obstructs the material progress of the Third World by encouraging spending there, an argument which of course completely disregards the level of consumption and the extension of choice as criteria of development. Yet these are what economic development is about. The notion of a damaging international demonstration effect also ignores the role of external contacts as an instrument of development; it overlooks the fact that the new consumer goods have to be paid for, which usually requires improved economic performance, such as more work, additional saving and investment, and readiness to produce for sale. In short, it overlooks the obvious consideration that a higher and more varied level of consumption is both the principal justification (or even the meaning) of material progress, and also an inducement to further economic advance.*

An updated version of the international demonstration effect proposes that the eager acceptance of Western consumer goods in the Third World is a form of cultural dependence engendered by Western business. (Rather paradoxically this charge is often accompanied by allegations of the damage to the Third World done by Western patents, which are said to obstruct the spread of technology.) The implication here is that the peoples of the Third World have no independent minds, that they are manipulated at will by foreigners. In fact, however, Western goods have been selectively and not indiscriminately accepted in the Third World and have been of massive benefit to millions of people there.

As was to be expected, allegedly lavish consumption habits and the pollution of the environment in the West have also been pressed into ideological service. A standard formulation is that per-capita consumption of food and energy in the U.S. is many times that in India, so that the American consumer despoils his Indian opposite number on a large scale—or even, according to Professor René Dumont, is guilty of a kind of cannibalism (for "in over-consuming meat which wasted the cereals which could have saved them, we ate the little children of the Sahel, of Ethiopia, and of Bangladesh"). Apart from everything else, such formulations fail to note that per-capita production in America exceeds production in India more than the difference in consumption, allowing it not only to pay for this consumption, but also to finance domestic and foreign investment, as well as foreign aid.

The so-called brain drain, the migration of qualified personnel from the Third World to the West, is again influentially canvassed as an in-

* At an official level, a damaging international demonstration effect may indeed operate by encouraging the adoption of show projects and unsuitable technologies financed with public funds. But this is not usually what the exponents of the international demonstration effect have in mind. Nor is it appropriate to blame the West for the policies of Third World governments in adopting unsuitable external models.

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stance of Western responsibility for poverty in the less-developed countries. This is a somewhat more complex issue, but it certainly does not substantiate the charge it is meant to support. As an adverse factor in Third World development, the voluntary departure of formally trained people seeking to improve their condition is almost certainly less important than the enforced exodus of highly educated people and of others with commercial and administrative skills, or the discrimination of Third World governments against ethnic minorities who remain, or their refusal to employ foreigners. Indeed, many voluntary emigrants leave because their own governments cannot or will not use their services—and not only when they belong to ethnic minorities. Thus their departure does not deprive the society of resources which are productive at present or in the foreseeable future.

Finally, there is the allegation that the West has damaged the Third World by ethnic discrimination. Yet the very countries in which such discrimination occurred were those where material progress was initiated or promoted by contact with the West. The most backward groups in the Third World (aborigines, desert peoples, nomads, and other tribesfolk) were quite unaffected by ethnic discrimination on the part of Europeans, whereas many communities against which discrimination was often practiced—Chinese in Southeast Asia, Indians in parts of Southeast Asia, Asians in Africa, and others—made great material strides forward. In any case, discrimination on the basis of color or race is not a European invention but has been endemic in much of Africa and Asia, notably so in India, for many centuries or even millennia.

VII

THE West may indeed be said to have contributed to the poverty of the Third World in two senses. But these differ radically from the familiar arguments.

The changes which have come about in much of the Third World through contact with the West have resulted in a significant decline in infant mortality and a greatly increased life expectancy for the population in general. That many more people in the Third World survive also means that many more poor people are alive. But if this represents a Western contribution to Third World poverty, it also represents an improvement obscured in conventional national-income statistics, which do not register health, life expectancy, and the possession of children as components of welfare. People, after all, prefer to survive and to see their children survive.

A second sense in which the West may be said to have contributed to the poverty of the Third World is through the politicization of social and economic life—that is, through the tendency to make everything a matter of politics. Thus in the terminal years of British rule extensive and pervasive state economic controls came to be introduced in the colonies, such as widespread licensing of economic activity, and state trading monopolies, including state monopolies over agricultural exports. This last measure was particularly important because it enabled the government to exert direct control over the livelihood of producers, and it has also served as a major source of government finance and patronage. In most British colonies, especially in Africa and in Burma, the ready-made framework of a *dirigiste* or even totalitarian state was handed over to the incoming independent governments.

Inefficient allocation of resources is a familiar result of state controls. Less familiar but more important results of these controls are restrictions on the movement of people between jobs and places, and also on the volume, diversity, and local dispersion of external contacts which are of special significance for the progress of poor countries. Still more important is the exacerbation of social and political tensions. The question of who runs the government has become paramount in many Third World countries, and is often a matter of life and death for millions of people. This is especially so in multiracial societies, like those of much of Asia and Africa. In such a situation the energies and resources of people, particularly the most ambitious and energetic, are diverted from economic activity to political life, partly from choice and partly from necessity. Foreign aid has also contributed to the politicization of life in the Third World. It augments the resources of governments as compared to the private sector; and the criteria of allocation tend to favor governments trying to establish state controls.

Many Third World governments would presumably have attempted such policies even without colonial rule or foreign aid, probably with the help of international organizations. But they could hardly have succeeded without the examples set by colonial governments or the personnel and money provided by Western aid or by international organizations, which in turn are financed largely by the West. Yet far from deploring these policies, the most vocal and influential critics of colonial rule and Western influence, both in the West itself and in the Third World, have usually urged their adoption and extension and have blamed Western governments for not having pursued them sooner and more vigorously.

VIII

I HAVE already indicated my belief that it is the feeling of guilt over material prosperity which accounts for the widespread promotion and acceptance of the bizarre and insubstantial arguments on which allegations of Western responsibility for poverty in the Third World

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are based. A striking example of much Anglo-Saxon sentiment in this area is an article by the late Cyril Connolly published several years ago in the London *Sunday Times* under the title "Black Man's Burden." Connolly writes:

> There is not a single country of which we can truthfully say that its occupation by a European power did it more good than harm. . . . It is a wonder that the white man is not more thoroughly detested than he is. . . . In our dealings with every single country, greed, masked by hypocrisy, led to unscrupulous coercion of the native inhabitants and worse, the culture and civilization which we brought was rotten to the core. . . . Cruelty, greed, uncertainty, and arrogance—the affectation of superiority exemplified by the color bar characterized what can be summed up in one word: exploitation. . . . We are to blame (I say we for nearly everyone has had some family connection with India, Africa, or the Far East).

This statement by a prominent intellectual is both ludicrous and characteristic. Actually only a tiny fraction of the British population ever had such contacts, and only a fraction of that fraction in any way misconducted itself toward the Third World. The article regards the population of Africa and Asia as much of a muchness ("the black man"), a treatment which is repugnant to millions of people both in the Third World and in the West, and especially so to the great majority of Indians, Chinese, and Arabs. The passage also suggests that incomes are extracted and not earned. And it well expresses the conception of collective guilt which has replaced individual sin in these discussions, thereby exonerating any single identifiable person of responsibility for immoral behavior.

Such feelings help to explain why Western governments support and endorse nonsensical, groundless, and offensive statements by leading Third World politicians, and why the West so often abases itself before governments (usually unrepresentative governments) whose countries are often sparsely populated by relatively small numbers of materially very backward people. It is sometimes suggested that such postures are necessary to keep the Third World outside the Soviet orbit. But with very few and rather doubtful exceptions, these stances have been counter-productive, and have not served the interests of Western political or military strategy (assuming that such a strategy exists). The references to political objectives are unconvincing ex-post-facto rationalizations of anomalous and baffling policies.

IX

But it is not only an unfounded sense of guilt which is reflected in these policies. There is also condescension or even contempt. Economic conditions in the Third World are thought to reflect Western exploitation, compounded by current Western consumption habits, while its economic future supposedly depends on Western aid. Thus it is we and not they who, it is assumed, will largely determine what happens to these societies.

The image of the Third World as a uniform, stagnant mass devoid of distinctive character is another aspect of the same condescension or contempt. The stereotype denies identity, character, personality, and responsibility to the societies and individuals of the so-called Third World. When a distinct independent culture and set of values are recognized, they are often condemned, and their enforced removal is proposed on the ground that they obstruct material progress. For instance, compulsory transformation of man and society is a major theme of Gunnar Myrdal's *Asian Drama*.

The most brutal maltreatment of minorities and the most extensive official discrimination on the basis of color, race, or religion in the Third World are often excused by saying that they have been inspired by the West. In fact, colonial governments have usually protected the minorities and not persecuted them; and discrimination long antedates colonialism. The view that these policies and attitudes have been inspired by the West implies again that the peoples of the Third World have no will or identity of their own and are simply creatures of the West.

Toleration or even support of the brutal policies of many Third World governments, then, seems to reflect a curious mixture of guilt feelings and condescension. Third World governments are not really guilty because they only follow examples set by the West. Moreover, like children, they are not altogether responsible for what they do. In any case, we must support them to atone for alleged wrongs, which our supposed ancestors perpetrated on their supposed ancestors. And economic aid is also necessary to help the children grow up. Similarly, the most offensive and baseless utterances of Third World statesmen need not be taken seriously, because they are only Third World statesmen (a license which has been extended to their supporters in the West).

The truth, however, is that the so-called Third World is a vast and diverse collection of societies differing widely in religion, culture, social institutions, personal characteristics and motivations, political arrangements, economic attitudes, material achievement, rates of progress, and many other respects. It is a travesty and not a useful simplification to lump together Chinese merchants of Southeast Asia, Indonesian peasants, Indian villagers, tribal societies of Africa, oil-rich Arabs of the Middle East, aborigines and desert peoples, inhabitants of huge cities in India, Africa, and Latin America—to envisage them all as a low-level uniform mass, a collectivity which moreover is regarded as no more than a copy of Western man, only poorer, and with even this

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difference the result only of Western responsibility.

The adoption of this stereotype and of the misleading terminology has been made easier by the lack of first-hand public knowledge of conditions in the Third World. Few people in the West know these countries, let alone the diverse policies pursued in them.

Yet had this travesty not suited certain influential interests in the West, it might never have succeeded in establishing itself. These interests have ranged from the churches seeking a new role for themselves to exporters seeking sheltered markets. Two categories may have been specially effective: the personnel and associates of the international organizations, and various disaffected groups who have come to dislike or even hate Western society.

Since World War II the people who work in one way or another for international organizations have come increasingly to consider themselves as agents and representatives of the Third World, a stance which has often suited their political, professional, and personal interests. They have helped to weld together at least superficially the representatives of extremely diverse, conflicting, or even bitterly hostile societies and countries into a bloc, united only by politically and materially profitable enmity to the West. This was achieved by preparing briefs for Third World spokesmen, by organizing meetings for the formulation of positions at international gatherings, and by other similar measures. The ideologies of the Third World and of the United Nations and its associated agencies have become largely interchangeable.

As to the second group—made up of people in the West who are sufficiently disillusioned with their own society to have become disaffected from or even hostile to it—some of them see the Third World as a useful instrument for promoting their cause in what is in essence a civil conflict in the West. The poverty of many Third World countries makes them more akin to instruments than independent allies. But whether as instruments or allies, their usefulness is enhanced if they are regarded as a homogeneous, undifferentiated mass or brotherhood united in opposition to the West.

X

POLICIES and activities promoted by a sense of guilt and by attitudes and interests related to it do not usually promote the welfare of the people they are supposed to help. Appeasement of guilt has nothing to do with a sense of responsibility. In the present context this is evident in the lack of concern with the conduct of governments which receive economic aid, or with the results of policies ostensibly inspired by humanitarian motives.

Thus the West supports governments whose domestic policies impoverish their own peoples and often inflict extreme hardship both on ethnic minorities and on the indigenous population. President Amin's massive and explicit persecution and expulsion of Asians is only one of many instances. Another is Tanzania (Mr. McNamara's favorite African country, as it has rightly been called) which receives large-scale Western aid while it forcibly herds millions of people into collectivized villages, often destroying their households to make them move.* Western aid has conferred respectability on governments like these and helped them conceal temporarily from their own people the economic consequences of their policies.

Commodity agreements for primary products present another anomaly. They are proposed and implemented ostensibly to relieve Third World poverty. Yet these arrangements raise the cost of living in an inflationary world; they benefit the most prosperous countries and groups in the Third World, including expatriates living there; they often benefit Western exporters of the same products or their close substitutes (many rich countries are net exporters of primary products); they provoke political tensions within the exporting countries as well as between them; and they greatly damage some of the poorest groups in many Third World countries, especially people who are barred from producing the controlled products in order to raise their prices. Yet they continue to be advocated and established because any measure which appears to represent a transfer of resources to Third World governments automatically finds favor.

IT WOULD be a delusion to believe that the reasoning and evidence produced here, even if accepted as valid, could substantially influence the attitudes of those afflicted by a feeling of guilt or who profit from it, let alone modify the policies which it inspires. Argument and evidence will not affect conduct and measures which are rooted in emotion, often reinforced by the play of personal and political interests. Moreover, the costs and sacrifices of policies inspired by such feelings are rarely borne by those who so warmly advocate their imposition. They are borne instead by ordinary people, mostly of the Third World, who will go on being harmed so long as such feelings, ideas, and policies continue to hold sway.

* See the Washington *Post*, May 6, 1975, for a report on this process.

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The Return of Islam

Bernard Lewis

IN THE great medieval French epic of the wars between Christians and Saracens in Spain, the *Chanson de Roland*, the Christian poet endeavors to give his readers, or rather listeners, some idea of the Saracen religion. According to this vision, the Saracens worshipped a trinity consisting of three persons, Muhammad, the founder of their religion, and two others, both of them devils, Apollin and Tervagant. To us this seems comic, and we are amused by medieval man unable to conceive of religion or indeed of anything else except in his own image. Since Christendom worshipped its founder in association with two other entities, the Saracens also had to worship their founder, and he too had to be one of a trinity, with two demons co-opted to make up the number. In the same spirit one finds special correspondents of the New York *Times* and of other lesser newspapers describing the current conflicts in Lebanon in terms of right-wing and left-wing factions. As medieval Christian man could only conceive of religion in terms of a trinity, so his modern descendant can only conceive of politics in terms of a theology or, as we now say, ideology, of left-wing and right-wing forces and factions.

This recurring unwillingness to recognize the nature of Islam or even the fact of Islam as an independent, different, and autonomous religious phenomenon persists and recurs from medieval to modern times. We see it, for example, in the nomenclature adopted to designate the Muslims. It was a long time before Christendom was even willing to give them a name with a religious meaning. For many centuries both Eastern and Western Christendom called the disciples of the Prophet Saracens, a word of uncertain etymology but clearly of ethnic not religious connotation, since the term is both pre-Islamic and pre-Christian. In the Iberian peninsula, where the Muslims whom they met came from Morocco, they called them Moors, and people of Iberian culture or under Iberian influence continued to call Muslims Moors even if they met them in Ceylon or in the Philippines. In most of Europe, Muslims were called Turks, after the main Muslim invaders, and a convert to Islam was said to have "turned Turk" even if the conversion took place in Marrakesh or in Delhi. Farther east, Muslims were Tatars, another ethnic name loosely applied to the Islamized steppe peoples who for a while dominated Russia.

Even when Europe began to recognize the fact that Islam was a religious and not an ethnic community, it expressed this realization in a sequence of false analogies beginning with the name given to the religion and its followers, Muhammedanism and Muhammedans. The Muslims do not, and never have, called themselves Muhammedans nor their religion Muhammedanism, since Muhammad does not occupy the same place in Islam as Christ does in Christianity. This misinterpretation of Islam as a sort of mirror image of Christendom found expression in a number of different ways—for example, in the false equation between the Muslim Friday and the Christian Sunday, in the reference to the Qur'an* as the Muslim Bible, in the misleading analogies between the mosque and the church, the ulema and the priests, and, coming more directly to our present concern, in the imposition on Muslim history and institutions of purely Western notions of country and nation and of what goes on within them. Thus, for example, in Gibbon's fascinating account of the career of the Prophet, Muhammad and his contemporaries were inspired by patriotism and love of liberty, two concepts which somehow seem inappropriate to the circumstances of 7th-century Arabia. For many centuries, Europe called the lands of the Ottoman Empire Turkey, a name which the inhabitants of those lands did not apply to their own country until the final triumph

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* Koran is the more generally used Western transliteration.

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among them of European political ideas with the proclamation of the Republic in 1923.

Modern Western man, being unable for the most part to assign a dominant and central place to religion in his own affairs, found himself unable to conceive that any other peoples in any other place could have done so, and was therefore impelled to devise other explanations of what seemed to him only superficially religious phenomena. We find, for example, a great deal of attention given by Western scholarship to the investigation of such meaningless questions as "Was Muhammad Sincere?" or "Was Muhammad an Enthusiast or a Deceiver?" We find lengthy explanations by historians of the "real" underlying significance of the great religious conflicts within Islam between different sects and schools in the past, and a similar determination to penetrate to the "real" meaning of sectarian and communal struggles at the present time. To the modern Western mind, it is not conceivable that men would fight and die in such numbers over mere differences of religion; there have to be some other "genuine" reasons underneath the religious veil. We are prepared to allow religiously defined conflicts to accredited eccentrics like the Northern Irish, but to admit that an entire civilization can have religion as its primary loyalty is too much. Even to suggest such a thing is regarded as offensive by liberal opinion, always ready to take protective umbrage on behalf of those whom it regards as its wards. This is reflected in the present inability, political, journalistic, and scholarly alike, to recognize the importance of the factor of religion in the current affairs of the Muslim world and in the consequent recourse to the language of left-wing and right-wing, progressive and conservative, and the rest of the Western terminology, the use of which in explaining Muslim political phenomena is about as accurate and as enlightening as an account of a cricket match by a baseball correspondent.

IF, THEN, we are to understand anything at all about what is happening in the Muslim world at the present time and what has happened in the past, there are two essential points which need to be grasped. One is the universality of religion as a factor in the lives of the Muslim peoples, and the other is its centrality.

"Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things which are God's." That is, of course, Christian doctrine and practice. It is totally alien to Islam. The three major Middle Eastern religions are significantly different in their relations with the state and their attitudes to political power. Judaism was associated with the state and was then disentangled from it; its new encounter with the state at the present time raises problems which are still unresolved. Christianity, during the first formative centuries of its existence, was separate from and indeed antagonistic to the state with which it only later became involved. Islam from the lifetime of its founder *was* the state, and the identity of religion and government is indelibly stamped on the memories and awareness of the faithful from their own sacred writings, history, and experience. The founder of Christianity died on the cross, and his followers endured as a persecuted minority for centuries, forming their own society, their own hierarchy, their own laws in an institution known as the Church—until, with the conversion of the Roman Emperor Constantine, there began the parallel processes of the Christianization of Rome and the Romanization of Christ.

In Islam, the process were quite different. Muhammad did not die on the cross. As well as a Prophet, he was a soldier and a statesman, the head of a state and the founder of an empire, and his followers were sustained by a belief in the manifestation of divine approval through success and victory. Islam was associated with power from the very beginning, from the first formative years of the Prophet and his immediate successors. This association between religion and power, community and polity, can already be seen in the Qur'an itself and in the other early religious texts on which Muslims base their beliefs. One consequence is that in Islam religion is not, as it is in Christendom, one sector or segment of life, regulating some matters while others are excluded; it is concerned with the whole of life—not a limited but a total jurisdiction. In such a society the very idea of the separation of church and state is meaningless, since there are no two entities to be separated. Church and state, religious and political authority, are one and the same. In classical Arabic and in the other classical languages of Islam there are no pairs of terms corresponding to lay and ecclesiastical, spiritual and temporal, secular and religious, because these pairs of words express a Christian dichotomy which has no equivalent in the world of Islam.* It is only in modern times, under Christian influence, that these concepts have begun to appear and that words have been coined to express them. Their meaning is still very imperfectly understood and their relevance to Muslim institutions dubious.

For the Muslim, religion traditionally was not only universal but also central in the sense that it constituted the essential basis and focus of identity and loyalty. It was religion which distinguished those who belonged to the group and marked them off from those outside the group. A Muslim Iraqi would feel far closer bonds with a non-Iraqi Muslim than with a non-Muslim Iraqi. Muslims of

* The modern Arab word for secular is *alamani*, literally worldly, i.e., pertaining to this world. Probably of Christian Arab origin, it passed into general use in the 19th century.

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different countries, speaking different languages, share the same memories of a common and sacred past, the same awareness of corporate identity, the same sense of a common predicament and destiny. It is not nation or country which, as in the West, forms the historic basis of identity, but the religio-political community, and the imported Western idea of ethnic and territorial nationhood remains, like secularism, alien and incompletely assimilated. The point was made with remarkable force and clarity by a Grand Vizier of the Ottoman Empire who, in reply to the exponents of the new-style patriotism, replied: "The Fatherland of a Muslim is the place where the Holy Law of Islam prevails." And that was in 1917.

In the 18th century, when, under the impact of Austrian and Russian victories against Turkey and British successes in India, Muslims began to be aware that they were no longer the dominant group in the world but were, on the contrary, threatened in their heartlands by a Europe that was expanding at both ends, the only really vital responses were religious reform movements, such as the Wahhabis in Arabia and the reformed Naqshbandi order which spread from India to other Muslim countries. In the early 19th century, when the three major European empires ruling over Muslims, those of Britain, France, and Russia, were advancing in India, North Africa, and Central Asia, the most significant movements of resistance were again religious—the Indian Wahhabis led by Sayyid Ahmad Brelwi from 1826 to 1831, the struggle of Abd al-Qadir in North Africa from 1832 to 1847, the dogged resistance of Shamil to the Russians in Dagistan and the Northern Caucasus from 1830 to 1859. All of them were crushed, but made a considerable impact at the time.

Then, for a while, Muslims were sufficiently overawed by the power, wealth, and success of Europe to desire to emulate European ways. But from the middle of the 19th century onward came a further wave of European imperial expansion—the suppression of the Indian mutiny followed by the disappearance of the last remnants of the Mogul monarchy in India and the consolidation of the British Empire in that formerly Muslim realm, the rapid advance of the Russians in Central Asia, the expansion of the French into Tunisia and of the British into Egypt, and the growing threat to the Ottoman Empire itself, all of which brought a response in the form of a series of pan-Islamic movements.

The unification of Germany and Italy was a source of inspiration in Muslim lands, particularly in Turkey where many Turkish leaders thought that their country could play a role similar to that of Prussia or Savoy in the unification of Germany and of Italy by serving as the nucleus for the unification of a much larger entity. But what would that larger entity be? Not a pan-Turkish entity. Such ideas were still far away in the future and were not even discussed at that time. The basic political identity and aspiration were Islamic, and pan-Islamism was the first and natural response to pan-Germanism and pan-Slavism. It was not until much later that pan-Turkism and pan-Arabism appeared on the political horizon and, even then, there is some doubt as to what they really signified.

The end of World War I, the breakup of the Ottoman Empire, the strains and stresses that followed and the opportunities which seemed to be offered by the collapse of Czarism in revolution and civil war also gave rise to a series of religiously inspired movements—Enver Pasha in a last throw formed the ambitiously titled Army of Islam, the objective of which was to liberate the Muslim subject peoples of the fallen Russian Empire. Some of these movements were linked with the Communists or taken over by the Communists at a time when the fundamentally anti-Islamic nature of Communism was not yet understood. Almost all were expressed in religious rather than in national or even social terms. Most significant among these movements was that which has since come to be known as the Turkish Nationalist Movement. Yet the revolt of the Kemalists in Anatolia was in its first inspiration as much Islamic as Turkish. Islamic men of religion formed an impressive proportion of its early leaders and followers. The language used at the time, the rhetoric of the Kemalists in this early stage, speaks of Ottoman Muslims rather than of Turks, and the movement commanded a great deal of support in the Islamic world. It was not until after their victory and after the establishment of the republic that, as a result of many factors, they began to lay the main stress on nationalist and secular aims.

During the 20th century, at least in the earlier decades, such movements of resistance were more commonly expressed in the fashionable form of political parties and in the fashionable language of political, more or less secular, nationalism. But neither the party organization nor the nationalist ideology really corresponded to the deeper instincts of the Muslim masses, which found an outlet in programs and organizations of a different kind—led by religious leaders and formulated in religious language and aspiration.

THE most important movement of this type in the 20th century is the organization known as the Muslim Brothers, *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*, founded in Egypt by a religious teacher named Hasan al-Banna. The early history of the movement is not clearly known, but it appears to have started in the late 20's and early 30's and to have been concerned in the first instance mainly with religious and social activities. The founder, known as the "Supreme Guide," sent missionaries to preach in mosques

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and other public places all over Egypt. The Brothers undertook large-scale educational, social, charitable, and religious work in town and countryside, and even engaged in some economic enterprises. They began political activity in 1936 after the signature of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty in that year and, by taking up the cause of the Palestine Arabs against Zionism and British rule, were able to extend the range of the movement to other Arab countries. They sent volunteers to fight with the Arab armies in the war of 1948, and thereafter seem to have controlled an armed force capable of playing some role in affairs. As a result, the Egyptian Prime Minister Noqrashi Pasha dissolved the organization, confiscated its property, and ordered the arrest of many of its members. He was assassinated in 1948 by one of the Brothers and shortly afterward the Supreme Guide himself was assassinated in circumstances which have never been established. The Brothers, though illegal, continued to function as a clandestine organization. In April 1951, they were again legalized in Egypt, though forbidden to engage in any secret or military activities. They took part in actions against British troops in the Suez Canal zone and seem to have played some role, of what nature is still unknown, in the burning of Cairo on January 26, 1952. They had close links, dating back to the war years, with some members of the secret committee of the "Free Officers" which seized power in Egypt in 1952. Apart from some general similarities in ideology and aspiration, many of the officers who carried out the coup were either members or at least sympathizers of the Muslim Brothers.

At first, relations between the Brothers and the officers were intimate and friendly, and even when, in January 1953, the military regime dissolved all political parties, the Brothers were exempted, on the grounds that they were a non-political organization. Relations between the new Supreme Guide and the Free Officers deteriorated, however, and before long the Brothers were attacking the new regime for its alleged failures to live up to their Islamic ideals. A period of quiet but sharp conflict followed, in the course of which the Brothers were very active, especially among workers and students and even among the security forces. In January 1954, the government again decreed the dissolution of the Order and the arrest of many of its leaders and followers. Later, there was some reconciliation as a result of which the arrested Brothers were released and the organization allowed to function on a non-political basis. The Anglo-Egyptian agreement of October 1954 stirred up trouble again and was bitterly opposed by the Brothers who insisted that only armed struggle could attain the desired objectives. On October 26, 1954, one of the Brothers just failed to assassinate President Nasser, who retaliated by taking severe repressive measures. More than a thousand were arrested and tried, and six, including some of the intellectual leaders of the movement, were sentenced to death and executed. The Brotherhood was now entirely illegal but nevertheless continued to function and seems to have engaged, from time to time, in conspiracies to overthrow the regime. Many arrests were made and in August 1966 three further executions took place, among them Sayyid Qutb, a leading ideologist of the Brothers. The Order continued to be active, albeit illegal, in some, and more openly in other, Arab countries. It remains a powerful if concealed force at the present day and there are recent signs of a return in Egypt.

The Egyptian Free Officers Movement in 1952 is not the only political movement with which the Muslim Brothers were connected. Another is the Fatah, the largest and most important of the Palestinian guerrilla organizations. Here, too, for obvious reasons, there are some uncertainties regarding the earlier history of the movement, but its past links with the Muslim Brothers seem to be clear. The imagery and symbolism of the Fatah is strikingly Islamic. Yasir Arafat's *nom de guerre,* Abu 'Ammar, the father of 'Ammar, is an allusion to the historic figure of 'Ammar ibn Yasir, the son of Yasir, a companion of the Prophet and a valiant fighter in all his battles. The name Fatah is a technical term meaning a conquest for Islam gained in the Holy War.* It is in this sense that Sultan Mehmet II, who conquered Constantinople for Islam, is known as *Fatih,* the Conqueror. The same imagery, incidentally, is carried over into the nomenclature of the Palestine Liberation Army, the brigades of which are named after the great victories won by Muslim arms in the Battles of Qadisiyya, Hattin, and Ayn Jalut. To name military units after victorious battles is by no means unusual. What is remarkable here is that all three battles were won in holy wars for Islam against non-Muslims—Qadisiyya against the Zoroastrian Persians, Hattin against the Crusaders, Ayn Jalut against the Mongols. In the second and third of these, the victorious armies were not even Arab; but they were Muslim, and that is obviously what counts. It is hardly surprising that the military communiqués of the Fatah begin with the Muslim invocation, "In the name of God, the Merciful and the Compassionate."

THE Muslim Brothers and their derivatives were in the main confined to the Arabic-speaking countries. But there were other parallel movements elsewhere. In Iran this trend is represented by an organization called the *Fida'iyan-i Islam,* the Devotees of Islam, a terrorist group which was active mainly in Teh-

* Another proffered explanation of the name Fatah is that it represents a reversed acronym for *Harakat Tahrir Falastin,* movement for the liberation of Palestine.

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ran between 1943 and 1955 and carried out a number of political assassinations, the most important being that of the Prime Minister, General Ali Razmara, in March 1951. For a while they played some part in Persian politics, until another, this time unsuccessful, attempt on the life of a Prime Minister, Hossein Ala, in October 1955 led to their suppression and prosecution and the execution of some of their leaders. The *Fida'iyan* had links with the Muslim Brothers in Egypt and elsewhere and exercised very considerable influence among the masses and, by terror, on politicians. They even seem to have enjoyed some limited support from the semi-official religious leadership.

In addition to these, there were many other religiously inspired movements in various Islamic countries—the Organization of Algerian Ulema, the Tijaniyya Brotherhood, and, more recently, the National Salvation party in Turkey, and one of the most interesting, the Basmachi Movement in Soviet Central Asia. The word Basmachi, which in Uzbek means brigand or marauder, is applied by the Soviet authorities to a succession of religiously inspired revolts against Russian or Soviet rule which began in January 1919 and continued until 1923 when the movement was decisively defeated, though activity by small groups of rebels continued for a number of years after that. The last Basmachi leader, Ibrahim Beg, withdrew to Afghanistan in 1926 and continued to raid into Soviet territory from there. He was captured by Soviet troops and executed in 1931. It is characteristic of Western attitudes that a search of half-a-dozen major encyclopedias failed to disclose any article on the Basmachis—probably the most important movement of opposition to Soviet rule in Central Asia.*

It is not, however, only in radical and militant opposition movements that this kind of religious self-identification and alignment are to be found. Governments—including avowedly secular and radical governments—have responded to the same instincts in times of crisis. After the Treaty of Lausanne, an exchange of population was agreed between Turkey and Greece under the terms of which members of the Greek minority in Turkey were to be repatriated to Greece, and members of the Turkish minority in Greece repatriated to Turkey. Between 1923 and 1930, a million and a quarter "Greeks" were sent from Turkey to Greece and a somewhat smaller number of "Turks" from Greece to Turkey.

At first sight, this would seem to be a clear case of the acceptance to the last degree of the European principle of nationality—Greeks and Turks unwilling or unable to live as national minorities among aliens, returned to Greece and to Turkey, to their own homelands and their own people. On closer examination, this exchange proves to have a somewhat different character. The words used were indeed Greeks and Turks—but what precisely did these words mean at that time and in that place? In the deserted Christian churches left by the Greeks of Karaman in southern Turkey, the inscriptions on tombstones are written in Turkish, though in Greek characters; among the families of the so-called repatriates, the great majority had little or no knowledge of Greek but spoke Turkish among themselves, writing it in Greek characters—just as Jews and Christians in Arabic-speaking countries for long wrote the common Arabic language in Hebrew or in Syriac instead of in Arabic characters. Script all over the Middle East is closely associated with religion. In the same way, many of the so-called Turks sent to Turkey from Crete and other places in Greece had little or no knowledge of Turkish, but habitually spoke Greek among themselves, frequently writing their Greek vernacular in the Turco-Arabic script. By any normal Western definition of nationality, the Greeks of Turkey were not Greeks, but Turks of the Christian faith, while the so-called Turks of Greece were for the most part Muslim Greeks. If we take the terms Greek and Turk in their Western and not in their Middle Eastern connotation, then the famous exchange of population between Greece and Turkey was not a repatriation of Greeks to Greece and of Turks to Turkey but a deportation of Christian Turks from Turkey to Greece and a deportation of Muslim Greeks from Greece to Turkey. It was only after their arrival in their putative homelands that most of them began to learn their presumptive mother tongues.

This occurred among two peoples, one of which is Christian though long subject to Muslim influence, and the other, though Muslim, the most advanced in secularization of all the Muslim peoples. Even today, in the secular republic of Turkey, the word Turk is by common convention restricted to Muslims. Non-Muslim citizens of the Republic are called Turkish citizens and enjoy the rights of citizenship, but they do not call themselves Turks nor are they so called by their neighbors. The identification of Turk and Muslim remains virtually total. And here it may be noted that while the non-Muslim resident of the country is not a Turk, the non-Turkish Muslim immigrant, whether from the former provinces of the Ottoman Empire or from elsewhere, very rapidly acquires a Turkish identity.

With Arabs the situation is somewhat more complex. In the Arabic-speaking countries there have for long been substantial minorities of Christians and Jews speaking the same Arabic language, though in

* The *Sovyetskaya Entsiklopediya*, on the other hand, devotes a long article to discrediting them.

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the past writing it in a different script and often speaking it with a slightly different dialect. When the idea of Arabism as a common nationality was first launched in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Arabic-speaking Christians played a prominent part in the movement. It was natural that they should be attracted by a national rather than a religious identity, since in the one they could claim the equal citizenship to which they could never aspire in the other. According to this view, the Arabs were a nation divided into various religions, in which Christians and even at times Jews might hope to share in the common Arabism along with the Muslim majority.

From the beginning, Christians played a leading role among the exponents, ideologists, and leaders of secular nationalism. As members of non-Muslim communities in a Muslim state, they occupied a position of stable, privileged, but nevertheless unmistakable inferiority, and in an age of change even the rights which that status gave them were endangered. In a state in which the basis of identity was not religion and community but language and culture, they could claim the full membership and equality which was denied to them under the old dispensation. As Christians, they were more open to Western ideas, and identified themselves more readily in national terms. The superior education to which they had access enabled them to play a leading part in both intellectual and commercial life. Christians, especially Lebanese Christians, had a disproportionately important role in the foundation and development of the newspaper and magazine press in Egypt and in other Arab countries, and Christian names figure very prominently among the outstanding novelists, poets, and publicists in the earlier stages of modern Arabic literature. Even in the nationalist movements, many of the leaders and spokesmen were members of Christian minorities. This prominence in cultural and political life was paralleled by a rapid advance of the Christian minorities in material wealth.

In recent decades, this prominence has ceased to be tolerable. Partly through measures of nationalization adopted by socialist governments, partly through other more direct means, the economic power of the Christian communities has been reduced in one country after another and is now being challenged in its last stronghold, the Lebanon. Christian predominance in intellectual life has long since been ended, and a new generation of writers has arisen, the overwhelming majority of whom are Muslims. There are still Christian politicians and ideologists, but their role is much circumscribed in a society increasingly conscious of its Muslim identity, background, and aspirations. Among the various organizations making up the Palestine Liberation Organization, the Fatah is overwhelmingly though not exclusively Muslim. On the other hand, many of the extremist organizations tend to be Christian, for in the radical extremism which they profess Christians still hope to find the acceptance and equality which eluded them in nationalism.

As the nationalist movement has become genuinely popular, so it has become less national and more religious—in other words, less Arab and more Islamic. In moments of crisis—and these have been many in recent decades—it is the instinctive communal loyalty which outweighs all others. A few examples may suffice. On November 2, 1945, demonstrations were held in Egypt on the anniversary of the issue by the British government of the Balfour Declaration. Though this was certainly not the intention of the political leaders who sponsored it, the demonstration soon developed into an anti-Jewish riot and the anti-Jewish riot into a more general outbreak in the course of which several churches, Catholic, Armenian, and Greek Orthodox, were attacked and damaged. A little later, on January 4-5, 1952, demonstrations were held in Suez, this time against the British in connection with continuing occupation of the Canal Zone. The demonstrators looted and fired a Coptic church and killed a number of Copts. Catholic, Armenian, and Greek Christians had nothing whatever to do with the Balfour Declaration, and the Copts are not English; indeed, there is none more Egyptian than they. One may go further and say that no attack or harm to the Copts was sought or desired by the nationalist leaders. Yet, in the moment of truth, the angry mob reacted instinctively to a feeling that the Copts—native Egyptian, Arabic-speaking, yet Christian—were on the other side, and treated them accordingly.

In such incidents there are no doubt local causes which may help to explain the actions of the mob.* But in both cases, and in others which could be quoted, they reflect a more fundamental attitude summed up in the tradition ascribed—probably falsely, but this makes no difference—to the Prophet, *"Al-Kufru millatun wahida"*—unbelief is one nation (or one religio-political community). The world is divided basically into two. One is the community of the Muslims, the other that of the unbelievers, and the subdivisions among the latter are of secondary importance.

The Lebanese civil war in 1958 and the struggle in Iraq between nationalists and Communists in the spring of 1959 also assumed a strongly religious character. On March 17, 1959, a prayer was recited in Egyptian mosques and published on the front pages of the Egyptian papers, for those who had been killed in Mosul:

* Local official inquiries decided that these actions had been instigated by "foreign agents." If so, the agents knew which themes to evoke, and how to direct the response.

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God is great! God is great! There is no might and no power save in God! May He strengthen the martyrs with His grace and ordain them everlasting life in His mercy and abase their enemies in shame and ignominy! God is great! God is great! There is no victory save in God! Whoever offends, God will crush him; whoever exalts himself by wrongdoing, God will humble him! Consider not those who are killed in the cause of God as dead, but as living, with their Lord who sustains them.

O God Almighty, All-powerful! Conquer Thine enemy with Thine omnipotence so that he returns to Thee! O God, Almighty, All-powerful, strengthen the community of Thy Prophet with Thy favor, and ordain defeat for their enemy. . . . In faith we worship Thee, in sincerity we call upon Thee, the blood of our martyrs we entrust to Thee, O merciful and compassionate One, Who answers the prayers of him who prays—our innocent martyrs and pure victims for the sake of Thy religion. For the glory of Thy religion they shed their blood and died as martyrs: believing in Thee, they greeted the day of sacrifice blissfully. Therefore place them, O God, as companions with the upright and the martyrs and the righteous—how good these are as companions! [Qur' an, iv, 69.]

The religious passion and fervor are unmistakable and did not fail to alarm the Christian minorities in Lebanon and elsewhere as indicating a resurgence of Islamic feeling.

Since then the regimes of the various Muslim states have become more, not less, self-consciously Islamic both in the respect they accord to their own religion and in their treatment of others. This is particularly noticeable in the so-called radical and revolutionary states which are intellectually and socially far more conservative than the politically conservative states, and find themselves obliged to show greater deference to popular sentiment. The treatment of Christians, though still falling well short of persecution, has changed for the worse and has led to a growing number of Christian emigrants, some to Lebanon, others to countries abroad. A Christian Arab writer has described the feelings of these emigrants as follows:

> Christians [they say] have no future in a country which is becoming all the time more socialist and totalitarian. Their children are indoctrinated in the schools, where the syllabus is devoted more and more to Islam and their faith is in danger. Debarred increasingly from public office and from nationalized societies [*sic*, the writer presumably means companies or corporations], robbed of the property of their parents and unable to engage in profitable business in a society where almost everything is under state control, how can they survive?*

An interesting side-effect of these changes is the evolution of attitudes among the groups who are now called Arab Americans. These consist overwhelmingly of Christians of Syrian and Lebanese origin. At the time of their arrival in the United States, they were, apart from a very small circle of intellectuals, virtually unaffected by Arab nationalism, which was in any case still in its infancy even in their countries of origin. At the time that they left their homelands and migrated across the ocean, they, like their neighbors, still thought in unequivocally communal terms. They were first and foremost Christians, and their feelings toward their old homelands resembled not those of American Jews toward Israel but rather those of American Jews toward the countries in Central and Eastern Europe from which they had come seeking a better and freer life in America. For a long time the development of the Palestine conflict left the American Arab Christians unmoved. Their recent involvement is a reflection not of their Arabism but of their Americanism, for in this way they are conforming to a common American pattern of ethnic identity, loyalty, and lobbying. Recent developments such as the suppression and expropriation of Christian schools in Syria, the pressure on Christian communities, and, above all, the current struggle in Lebanon seem already to be leading to a reassessment of their position and, among some of them, a return to earlier attitudes.

THE growth of Islam's political effect can be observed in two respects—in the field of international politics, and in internal affairs. The attempt to exploit the sentiment of Islamic brotherhood for international political purposes dates back to the 1870's, when the Ottoman government under Sultan Abdulaziz, and then more actively under Sultan Abdülhamid, tried to mobilize opinion all over the Muslim world in support of the faltering Ottoman state and to provide it with the alliances which it needed at this time of weakness and impoverishment. This policy came to be known by the name of pan-Islamism—a reflection in Islamic terms, as was noted above, of such European movements as pan-Germanism and pan-Slavism.

From the beginning, pan-Islamism was of two kinds—one official and promoted by one or another Islamic government in pursuit of its own purposes; the other radical, often with revolutionary social doctrines, and led by a more or less charismatic religious figure, with or without the sponsorship of a government. The counterpart of Abdülhamid was the popular activist Jemal al-Din, known as Al-Afghani. Neither Abdülhamid's official pan-Islamism nor Jemal al-Din's radical pan-Islamism produced much by way of political results, though both undoubtedly heightened the common Muslim sense of identity. This was further helped by the rapid improvement of com-

* In *Religion in the Middle East*, edited by A. J. Arberry (Cambridge, 1969), Volume I, p. 415.

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munications—the press, the telegraph, and, in more recent times, radio and television.

Radical pan-Islamism of various types appeared during the interwar period—at first from left-wing and, indeed, frequently Communist, sources, and later from right-wing, nationalist, and sometimes fascist sources. The most noteworthy example of the latter was the pan-Islamic activities of the Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husayni, who enjoyed Nazi sponsorship and eventually spent the war years in Hitler's Germany.

The postwar period brought several new forms of pan-Islamic activity. None came to much until the convening of the Islamic Congress of Mecca in 1954. From the first, the most important initiative in the Mecca Congress was that of the Egyptians whose intentions can already be seen in Nasser's booklet, *The Philosophy of the Revolution.*

> There remains the Third Circle [the first two were the Arab and African circles]—the circle encompassing continents and oceans which, as I have said, is the circle of our Brethren-in-Islam who, wherever their place under the sun, turn with us toward the same Qibla, their lips solemnly saying the same prayers.
>
> My faith in the magnitude of the positive effectiveness that could result from strengthening the Islamic tie that binds all Muslims grew stronger when I accompanied the Egyptian mission to Saudi Arabia to offer condolences on the death of its great king.
>
> As I stood before the Kaaba, with my thoughts wandering 'round every part of the world which Islam has reached, I fully realized the need for a radical change of our conception of the Pilgrimage.
>
> I said to myself: The journey to the Kaaba should no longer be construed as an admission card to Paradise, or as a crude attempt to buy forgiveness of sins after leading a dissipated life.
>
> The Pilgrimage should have a potential political power. The world press should hasten to follow and feature its news not by drawing attractive pen pictures of its rites and rituals for the delectation of readers, but by its representation as a periodical political conference at which the heads of all the Islamic states, leaders of opinion, scientists, eminent industrialists, and prominent businessmen assemble to draw up at this world Islamic Parliament the broad lines of the policies to be adopted by their respective countries and lay down the principles ensuring their close cooperation until they have again gathered together in the following session.
>
> They assemble demure and devout, but mighty strong; unambitious of power, but active and full of energy: submissive to Divine Will, but immutable in difficulties and implacable with their enemies.
>
> They assemble confirmed believers in the Life to Come, but equally convinced that they have a place under the sun which they should occupy in this life.
>
> I remember I expressed some of these views to His Majesty King Saud.
>
> His Majesty assented saying, "Truly this is the real purpose of the Pilgrimage."
>
> Truth to tell, I personally cannot think of any other conception.
>
> As I contemplate the eighty million Muslims in Indonesia, the fifty million in China, the few millions in Malaya, Thailand, and Burma, the hundred million in Pakistan, the well-nigh over a hundred million in the Middle East, the forty million in the Soviet Union, and the millions of others in other remote and far-flung corners of the earth—as I ponder over these hundreds of millions of Muslims, all welded into a homogeneous whole by the same Faith, I come out increasingly conscious of the potential achievements cooperation among all these millions can accomplish—cooperation naturally not going beyond their loyalty to their original countries, but which will ensure for them and their Brethren-in-Islam unlimited power.*

Under the skillful and energetic leadership of Anwar Sadat, who had been appointed Secretary-General, the Islamic Congress, thus conceived, served as a useful adjunct to Egyptian policy, along with such parallel organizations as the Afro-Asian Solidarity Conference and the Arab League. But it was no doubt this kind of use which also led to its failure. Like the previous attempts by other Muslim governments, this new Egyptian-sponsored pan-Islamism was too obviously related to state purposes and failed to arouse the necessary response from elsewhere.

But there is, perhaps, a deeper reason for the persistent weakness of official pan-Islamism. In the first century and a half of the Caliphate, Islam was indeed one single world state. But at that early date, it ceased to be so, and was never reunited again. Thus, while the political experience of Muslims, the shared memories of the past which they cherish, condition them to a sense of common social and cultural identity, they do not bring them any tradition of a single Islamic state, but rather one of political pluralism combined with socio-cultural unity.

ATTEMPTS at international pan-Islamism have produced limited results. They have, however, already gone very much further than anything comparable within the Christian world, and have occasionally had diplomatic consequences, as for example when the Arab states as a bloc voted for Pakistan against India's candidacy for the Security Council—and this despite India's devoted and selfless service to the Arab cause. Similar choices may be discerned in the support given to Muslims in the Philippines, Eritrea, and some African countries when they

* Gamal Abdel Nasser, *The Philosophy of the Revolution*, Cairo, n.d., pp. 67-68.

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find themselves in collision with non-Muslim majorities or governments. But caution has so far prevailed concerning the position of Muslims in the Soviet Union, in Eastern European states, and in China.*

Islam has shown its strength much more clearly in the internal politics of Muslim countries. Here two examples may serve, both of them in countries under autocratic rule. The first case was in Tunisia, where in February 1960 President Bourguiba put forward the interesting idea that the month-long fast of Ramadan with the resultant loss of work and production was a luxury that a poor and developing country could not afford. For a Muslim ruler simply to abolish or disallow a major prescription of the holy law is unthinkable. What President Bourguiba did was to try to justify its abolition in terms of the holy law itself. This law allows a Muslim to break the fast if he is on campaign in a holy war, or *jihad*. Bourguiba argued that a developing country was in a state of *jihad* and that the struggle to obtain economic independence by development was comparable with a defensive war for national independence. In pursuit of this argument he proposed to abolish the rules whereby restaurants, cafés, and other public places remained open at night during the month of Ramadan and to oblige them to keep normal hours. In support of this new interpretation of the law, he tried to obtain a *fatwa*, a ruling, from the Mufti of Tunis and other religious authorities. The religious authorities refused to give him what he wanted. The great mass of the people observed the fast despite the President's dispensation, and Bourguiba was finally compelled to beat a more or less graceful retreat. Even an autocratic socialist head of state, in pursuit of so worthy an end as economic development, could not set aside a clear ruling of the holy law.

A more striking illustration of the religious limits of autocracy occurred in Syria in the spring of 1967. On April 25 of that year, the Syrian official army magazine, *Jaysh al-Sha'b*, the Army of the People, published an article by a young officer named Ibrahim Khalas entitled "The Means of Creating a New Arab Man." The only way, according to this article, to build Arab society and civilization was to create

> a new Arab socialist man, who believes that God, religion, feudalism, capitalism, and all the values which prevailed in the pre-existing society were no more than mummies in the museums of history. . . . There is only one value; absolute faith in the new man of destiny . . . who relies only on himself and on his own contribution to humanity . . . because he knows that his inescapable end is death and nothing beyond death . . . no heaven and no hell. . . . We have no need of men who kneel and beg for grace and pity.

This was the first time that such ideas had been expressed in print in any of the revolutionary and radical Arab states, and the response was immediate and violent. Until that point an apparently cowed population had passively acquiesced in a whole series of radical political and economic changes. The suppression of free speech, the confiscation of property evoked no response—but a denial of God and religion in an officially sponsored journal revealed the limits of acquiescence, the point at which a Muslim people was willing to stand up and be counted.

In the face of rapidly mounting tension and violence, the government took several kinds of action. One was to arrest a number of religious leaders; another was to confiscate copies of the journal containing the offending article and to arrest its author and the members of the editorial board. On May 5, the author and editors were imprisoned and on the following day the semi-official newspaper, *Al-Thawra*, "The Revolution," proclaimed the respect of the Syrian regime for God and religion. On May 7, Radio Damascus announced that

> the sinful and insidious article published in the magazine *Jaysh al-Sha'b* came as a link in the chain of an American-Israeli reactionary conspiracy. . . . Investigation by the authorities has proved that the article and its author were merely tools of the CIA which has been able to infiltrate most basely and squalidly and to attain its sinful aims of creating confusion among the ranks of the citizens.

The resistance, it was later announced, had been concerted with the Americans, the British, the Jordanians, the Saudis, the Zionists, and Selim Hatum (a Druse opponent of the regime). On May 11, the author and editors were sentenced by a military court to life imprisonment.

EVEN in Nasserist Egypt, Islam continued to provide a main focus of loyalty and morale. Thus, in the manual of orientation of the Supreme Command of the Egyptian forces, issued in 1965, the wars in the Yemen and against Israel are presented in terms of a *jihad* or holy war for God against the unbelievers. In reply to questions from the troops as to whether the classical Islamic obligation of *jihad* has lapsed or is still in force, orientation officers are instructed to reply that the *jihad* for God is still in force at the present time and is to be interpreted in our own day in terms of a striving for social justice and human betterment. The enemies against

* A different kind of exception is the refusal of some Arab and some other Muslim countries to support Turkey on the Cyprus question. One element in this is residual resentment against former rulers; another is disapproval of the policies of Westernization and secularization pursued by the Turkish Republic since its inception.

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whom the *jihad* is to be waged are those who oppose or resist the achievement of these aims, that is to say imperialism, Zionism, and the Arab reactionaries.

> In accordance with this interpretation of the mission of Islam and in accordance with this understanding of the *jihad* we must always maintain that our military duty in the Yemen is a *jihad* for God and our military duty against Israel is a *jihad* for God, and for those who fight in this war there is the reward of fighters in the holy war for God. . . . Our duty is the holy war for God. "Kill them wherever you come upon them and drive them from the places from which they drove you." [Qur'an, ii, 191.]

That is to say, the war is a holy war, and the rewards of martyrdom as specified in scripture await those who are killed in it. Similar ideas are found in the manual of orientation issued to Egyptian troops in June 1973, and it is noteworthy that the operational code name for the crossing of the Canal was Badr, the name of one of the battles fought by the Prophet against his infidel opponents. Incidentally, the enemy named in the manual is not Zionism or even Israel but simply "the Jews." One of the major contrasts between Syrian and Egyptian orientation literature is the far greater stress laid by the Egyptians on religion as contrasted with the more ideological approach of the Syrians.

There have been two recent wars in which Muslims fought against non-Muslims—the Turkish landing in Cyprus and the subsequent fighting, and the Syrian and Egyptian war against Israel in October 1973. Both in Egypt and in Turkey, the language, the rhetoric accompanying the offensives, were strikingly religious. Popular legend, of the kind that flourishes in wartime in all societies, also assumed an overwhelmingly religious character, with stories of intervention by the Prophet and the angels of Allah on the side of the Muslims —i.e., the Egyptians against their enemies. A writer who complained of this in the press, pointing out that it devalued the achievement of the Egyptian armed forces, was bitterly denounced. Not all the Egyptians are of course Muslim. An important minority is Christian, and these too fought in the army and, indeed, number several senior officers among them. This fact is recognized in the guidance manual of the army which invokes Christian as well as Muslim religious beliefs. Yet, at the moment when news got through of the Israeli crossing to the west bank of the Canal, a rumor immediately appeared ascribing this penetration to the treachery of a Coptic officer. There was of course no truth whatsoever in this story, and the Egyptian government took immediate steps to discount and deny it. It was probably not entirely coincidental that a Coptic general was promoted to an army command at that moment. Even more striking is the appearance of religious language among the secular Turks who in the fighting in Cyprus used numerous Islamic terms to describe themselves, their adversaries, and the struggle between them.

In recognizing the extent to which communal loyalty remains a significant force in the life of Muslim countries, one should not fall into the opposite error of discounting the degree of effective secularization. Particularly in the more developed countries, changes which are probably irreversible have already taken place, especially in the realms of social and economic life and in the organization of the law and the judiciary. In some countries, such as Turkey, Iran, and Egypt, geography and history have combined to give the inhabitants a special sense of separate identity and destiny, and have advanced them on the path toward secular nationhood. But even in these Islam remains a significant, elsewhere a major, force. In general, the extent of secularization is less than would at first appear. In education, for example, ostensibly secular schools and universities have to an increasing extent been subject to religious influences. Even in radical states like Syria, the net effect of secularization seems to be directed against minority religions much more than against Islam. A Syrian government report published in October 1967 states that private schools, meaning for the most part foreign-based Christian schools, would be obliged to use Ministry of Education textbooks on Christianity and Islam in which the teaching of the two religions was unified "in a manner which would not leave room for confessionalism . . . incompatible with the line of thought in our age."

From the foregoing, certain general conclusions emerge. Islam is still the most effective form of consensus in Muslim countries, the basic group identity among the masses. This will be increasingly effective as the regimes become more genuinely popular. One can already see the contrast between the present regimes and those of the small, alienated, Western-educated elite which governed until a few decades ago. As regimes come closer to the populace, even if their verbiage is left-wing and ideological, they become more Islamic. Under the Ba'thist regime in Syria, more mosques were built in the three years after the *Jaysh al-Sha'b* incident than in the previous thirty.

Islam is a very powerful but still an undirected force in politics. As a possible factor in international politics, the present prognosis is not very favorable. There have been many attempts at a pan-Islamic policy, none of which has made much progress. One reason for their lack of success is that those who have made the attempt have been so unconvincing. This still leaves the possibility of a more convincing leadership, and there is ample evidence in virtually all Muslim countries

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of the deep yearning for such a leadership and a readiness to respond to it. The lack of an educated modern leadership has so far restricted the scope of Islam and inhibited religious movements from being serious contenders for power. But it is already very effective as a limiting factor and may yet become a powerful domestic political force if the right kind of leadership emerges.

In the period immediately preceding the outbreak of the Six-Day War in 1967, an ominous phrase was sometimes heard, "First the Saturday people, then the Sunday people." The Saturday people have proved unexpectedly recalcitrant, and recent events in Lebanon indicate that the priorities may have been reversed. Fundamentally, the same issue arises in both Palestine and Lebanon, though the circumstances that complicate the two situations are very different. The basic question is this: Is a resurgent Islam prepared to tolerate a non-Islamic enclave, whether Jewish in Israel or Christian in Lebanon, in the heart of the Islamic world? The current fascination among Muslims with the history of the Crusades, the vast literature on the subject, both academic and popular, and the repeated inferences drawn from the final extinction of the Crusading principalities throw some light on attitudes in this matter. Islam from its inception is a religion of power, and in the Muslim world view it is right and proper that power should be wielded by Muslims and Muslims alone. Others may receive the tolerance, even the benevolence, of the Muslim state, provided that they clearly recognize Muslim supremacy. That Muslims should rule over non-Muslims is right and normal.* That non-Muslims should rule over Muslims is an offense against the laws of God and nature, and this is true whether in Kashmir, Palestine, Lebanon, or Cyprus. Here again, it must be recalled that Islam is not conceived as a religion in the limited Western sense but as a community, a loyalty, and a way of life—and that the Islamic community is still recovering from the traumatic era when Muslim governments and empires were overthrown and Muslim peoples forcibly subjected to alien, infidel rule. Both the Saturday people and the Sunday people are now suffering the consequences.

* The same concept finds expression in the Muslim law of marriage, which allows a Muslim man to marry a non-Muslim woman, but categorically forbids a marriage between a non-Muslim man and a Muslim woman. The rationale is that in a marriage the man is the dominant, the woman the subordinate, partner—and Islam must prevail.

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In Praise of Alexander M. Bickel

Nelson W. Polsby

IN *The Morality of Consent*,* the late Alexander M. Bickel begins the task of constructing a liberal political philosophy that avoids the optimistic authoritarianism afflicting so much of contemporary liberal thought. In Bickel's view, there is a strain of thinking traceable to Edmund Burke and the English Whigs of the 18th century that leads to a perspective on present-day problems far more serviceable, more prudent, and more compassionate than the "moral, principled, legalistic" contractarian tradition that Bickel finds written, in particular by judicial progressives, into modern American political doctrine. "The Whig model," says Bickel, "begins not with theoretical rights but with a real society. . . . Limits are set by culture, by time-and-place-bound conditions, and within these limits the task of government informed by the present state of values is to make a peaceable, good, and improving society."

Readers should not leap too quickly to the conclusion that such a set of seemingly safe-and-sane axioms contains no surprises. In Bickel's audacious hands the Whig tradition yields, among other things, an attack on the concept of citizenship and a defense of civil disobedience. As to the first argument, Bickel says that although the concept of citizenship had some meaning and some point in classical Greek political theory, in the doctrines of John Locke, and in English law, the framers of the U.S. Constitution broke away from the notion of the "indelible, inalienable status of citizenship," if for no other reason than to attract immigrants. "The original Constitution," says Bickel, "presented the edifying picture of a government that bestowed rights on people and persons and held itself out as bound by certain standards of conduct in its relations with people and persons, not with some legal construct called citizen." Citizenship, Bickel argues, as contrasted with mere habitation, made its inauspicious debut as a significant distinction in American politics with the Dred Scott decision and, with the Slaughter-House cases of 1873, once again receded until its revival in a few cases by the Warren Court.

The application of the concept is, Bickel argues, "regressive . . . parochial, and exclusive. A relationship between government and the governed that turns on citizenship can always be dissolved or denied. . . . No matter what the safeguards, it is at best something given, and given to some and not to others, and it can be taken away. . . . Emphasis on citizenship as the tie that binds the individual to government and as the source of his rights leads to metaphysical thinking . . . and more particularly to symmetrical thinking, to a search for reciprocity and symmetry and clarity of uncompromised rights and obligations, rationally ranged one next to and against the other. Such thinking bodes ill for the endurance of free, flexible, responsive, and stable institutions and of a balance between order and liberty."

That balance for Bickel relies heavily upon the prudential restraint of government, and of powerful individuals within government. His first book, published in 1957, was a study of Justice Brandeis's unpublished opinions. Why unpublished? Because their object, frequently, was evidently to persuade within the Court itself, or to avoid drawing attention too sharply to an unfortunate implication of a majority view that might otherwise be exploited in future litigation. "The most important thing we do," Bickel quotes Brandeis as saying, "is not doing."

This view of the art and craft of judicial behavior formed and enlightened the remainder of Bickel's voluminous writings on politics and the Constitution. His most famous elaboration of the notion was a detailed exploration of means and justifications by which the Court can dispose of cases while avoiding judgment on constitutional issues, which he codified under the phrase "the passive virtues."

It is instructive to see how much of a piece Bickel's later writing is with his earlier work, as his view of the necessary restraints of process-mindedness upon judges and their need for political prudence slowly ripens into a conviction that all political actors—not judges alone—are required to adhere to the "morality of process, which is the morality of consent." The Court, Bickel saw early, in company with others, being electorally irresponsible, "has no earth to draw strength from."

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Later, Bickel's view of the grounds upon which an inference of consent might be properly founded grew, very much in harmony with his earlier understanding of the Court's vulnerability. Like judges, independently acting "individuals are under a duty to ration themselves, to assess occasions in terms of their relative as well as absolute importance," and even the popular branches of government, to which judges should defer, nevertheless in the American constitutional order possess their legitimacy not by "a presumed theoretical consent but a continuous actual one, born of continual responsiveness." Thus it is not electoral results alone or even principally that for Bickel comprise the earth that the popular branches of government draw strength from, "for majorities are in large part fictions. They exist only on election day and they can be registered on very few issues. To be responsive and to enjoy consent, government must register numerous expressions of need and interest by numerous groups, and it must register relative intensities of need and interest."

Civil disobedience, in Bickel's view, was one method by which intensely held interests might be expressed. "It is because on most issues we command no definite answers grounded in solid and generally shared values that we value an open, responsive, varied, and continual process of law-formation and provide numerous stages of decision-making, most of them provisional, and numerous opportunities for revision and resistance, including civil disobedience." This to be sure is not the whole story, since civil disobedience, to claim legitimacy as part of a normal process of political give-and-take, relies heavily upon the good intentions of the users thereof. "The use of civil disobedience not to redress grievances on the assumption of the continued operation of the system and by plausible appeal to its own principles, but against it, ought not be tolerated. Civil disobedience is one thing, revolutionary activity quite another, and the difference between them is told not only by their manner but also by their objectives."

Thus it appears that Bickel's emerging political philosophy places not only a heavy and necessary burden upon the capacity of political actors to calculate prudentially, but also relies greatly upon their willingness to undertake or to attend to empirical inquiry. This is an amusing irony to those who recall Bickel's own cordial antipathy to empirical social science. Yet it is an inescapable implication of his emerging position for, otherwise, the criteria Bickel emphasizes as crucial in determining the legitimacy and appropriateness of a given line of action may be too easily invoked by cynics or by the misguided, without fear of effective rebuttal.

Bickel does not stress, but might later have come to do so, a strength of his view from the standpoint of the political system, if not from the standpoint of individuals within it—that a system guided by Bickel's notions of prudence and restraint would tend to foster the making of relatively small mistakes in judgment, and would tend to have a limited capacity for undertaking large, disastrous schemes of self-improvement. In a heterogeneous society filled with persons and groups having greatly differing interests, the alternatives to accepted political processes and to consent as a means of legitimizing public action do indeed look as ugly as Bickel suggests. "If the streets belong to the people, they are going to belong to all the people, not just young radicals. Self-righteousness and zealotry are human attributes, not political positions. If they are tolerated on the Left, they will gain ascendancy on the Right."

II

As readers of COMMENTARY undoubtedly well know, Alexander Bickel was not only a teacher of law, a legal historian, and a writer of political philosophy, but also a political activist, certainly one of the most successful Americans of his time whose participation in the public arena was grounded solely in knowledge and its application to public problems. He aspired to have an impact upon his time, to expound the Constitution and the laws not only to his students but to his colleagues in the law schools, to Supreme Court Justices, and to the nation at large. And so he did. Like his revered mentor, Felix Frankfurter, Bickel became law professor to his generation. The political arena gave Bickel his agenda; in this respect he followed an honorable tradition of scholarship in public law, which in the law journals and case-books consists primarily of learned commentary upon current events. But he spread himself far beyond the places where legal scholars gather, in COMMENTARY* and in the *New Republic*, before bar associations and at college commencements, on the New York *Times* Op-Ed page and in front of congressional committees.

There is no special course of training in our universities, nor any particular niche in American society for persons who become public philosophers. Indeed the very idea of there being such creatures as public philosophers—writers who address contemporary problems with sufficient detachment, learning, and discrimination to merit

* Bickel's major articles in COMMENTARY include "Reapportionment and Liberal Myths" (June 1963), "The Civil Rights Act of 1964" (August 1964), "The Failure of the Warren Report" (October 1966), "Is Electoral Reform the Answer?" (December 1968), "Judging the Chicago Trial" (January 1971), "The Constitution and the War" (July 1972), "The 'Uninhibited, Robust & Wide-Open' First Amendment" (November 1972), "Watergate and the Legal Order" (January 1974), and "Notes on the Constitution" (August 1975), a section adapted from *The Morality of Consent*.

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such an honorific title—is open to the skepticism of any attentive reader of most current commentary on events of the day. Alexander Bickel himself more than once wondered about the social problem posed by this curious deficit in American political life. Now that he is gone, it seems obvious enough that it is not alone an especially favored position in society that produces people who can add to the common understanding of public problems, but also a peculiar combination of qualities and talents, and most of all, perhaps, what Bickel's colleague Leon Lipson discerned in Bickel as the acceptance of "an ethical . . . obligation to put oneself in the flow" of events.

It may be that there are more people who are willing to do this than are able, who can muster the quick wit, the firm opinions, the capacity to be irritated into engagement by headlines or enticed into public rumination by congressional committees or editors, and, of course, the solid foundation of pertinent knowledge that Bickel had instantaneously at his command. James Boswell put the matter felicitously in his observation of a politician and thinker whom Bickel particularly admired when he exclaimed over "the extraordinary promptitude of Mr. Burke, who while he is equal to the greatest things, can adorn the least."

Adornment is precisely what Bickel brought to such occasions as the Dick Cavett show on the night he polished off a whole flock of notables singlehandedly in defense of a Supreme Court ruling upholding certain restrictions on obscenity, or the Yale Alumni meeting in which, when asked, "What is happening to morality today?," he replied, "It threatens to engulf us." His eye ever fixed "on that middle distance where values are provisionally held, are tested, and evolve within the legal order," Bickel jumped into any number of current controversies, but as his central principle came to be that of defending a prudent middle ground—a ground which by the lights of some of his friends he now and again miscalculated—he was never very predictable to the handicappers who assign the labels "liberal" and "conservative" to participants in public discussion.

Avoiding these labels, and having something fresh and worthwhile to say on nearly everything takes, as I have argued, a singular talent. It also requires a certain bravery, a willingness to make a few of the mistakes in public that elected politicians cannot afford to make and which in any event can on balance serve to advance public discussion on principled lines.

PERHAPS the most conspicuous example of this quality of bravery in Bickel's life was no mistake, but a resounding success: his defense of the New York *Times* in the Pentagon Papers case. Bickel was asked to defend the *Times* quite by accident. He had engaged to prepare an *amicus* brief for the *Times* on another case—the Caldwell case—and chanced to be nearby when the *Times*'s own law firm advised capitulation to Attorney General Mitchell's warning not to publish, and bowed out of defending the paper if the *Times* decided to go ahead. Bickel accepted the brief, rounded up a former student and his well-known New York firm to back him up, and in a week's time was arguing before a federal trial judge, a U.S. Court of Appeals, and, shortly thereafter, the U.S. Supreme Court. He won his case, many observers think, by refusing to adopt the hard-line absolutist view of the First Amendment that passes for constitutional law in most American newsrooms. Instead, his defense of the *Times* was vintage Bickel. In a pivotal colloquy with Mr. Justice Stewart he conceded that, yes, there were conditions which could overcome a strong First Amendment presumption against prior restraint on publication, but that the government had utterly failed to make its case on the facts.

Where is the bravery in this? It may help the reader to know that in his twenty-five years or so in the practice of his profession Alexander Bickel had never before argued a case in any court, save (long ago) a small claim in New Haven, which he lost. But Bickel was right, of course, to bet on himself, as a public man must, if he aspires to leave an imprint on his times (not to speak of his *Times*), and believes he has the means to make a worthy contribution.

As passionately eager as he was to make that contribution, even here Bickel knew how to draw a fundamental line. Bickel's colleague, Charles Black, describes a day

> when a question was asked him, and when a "yes" might, at the very least, have made possible further movement down the road toward what must have been a much-desired (I dare say the most-desired) goal. The question, mark you, was a close one; an honest and competent man might easily have concluded that the right answer was "yes." Alexander Bickel had come, on balance, to the opposite conclusion. He said "no," and a door closed; "no" was not the right answer, not the wanted answer. His name, by low men for low reasons, was doubtless crossed off a list. But it stayed, and stays, on another list—the list of those to whom courage (and therefore honesty) is first.

The highest public office Alexander Bickel ever held was that of the leading academic to be mentioned for the Supreme Court whenever a vacancy occurred, a mantle he gradually assumed as his predecessor in this role, his teacher, Paul Freund, gracefully entered his sixties. Both the honor and the inherent ridiculousness of the position appealed to Bickel. As is also true of the Vice President, every public act and utterance of the academic mentionee is liable to be held against him; his every move is a false move. To someone of a more cautious temperament, this would be uncomfortably inhibiting. Bickel's view of the mat-

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ter was quite the reverse, and he seized the bully pulpit gratefully. Cunning calculation was in his view morally debilitating and a waste of time. He was confirmed in this opinion after the assassination of Robert Kennedy, who might well, if elected President, actually have appointed Bickel to the Court. A mature and conscientious student of the law, however, whose opinion was more and more sought after in public and behind the scenes, would rejoice in the opportunities of the moment, would call them as he saw them, and not attempt to second-guess the future. "Ring Lardner assures us," Bickel said, "that the odds on life itself are six to five against."

III

THE first time I heard Bickel quote this epigram from Lardner, I can recall no ironic edge of self-reference. Lardner, as it happens, died in his forty-ninth year and Bickel in his fiftieth, just over a year ago. It was less than a year earlier that he discovered how soon Lardner's odds were to apply to him. During late 1973 and early 1974 he underwent several operations, and grew weaker. The voice, however, as he pointed out, remained strong. His readiness for speculation, for gossip, for disputation, for intellectual roughhouse diminished very little, though he became more straightforwardly affectionate with friends.

A folder in my cupboard testifies to the fact that since 1956, Bickel's first year of writing for the *New Republic,* I had been admiring and collecting his work. Less than a decade later, by good fortune, I became acquainted with him and, to my amazement, in due course came to know him fairly well. Now, a correspondingly bewildering experience has been visited upon Bickel's contemporaries, as our friend, with whom we argued and laughed and sought to get a word in edgewise, slips away from us and finds his honored place in the intellectual history of our time. It is, surely, a distinction he earned and deserved and would have relished, to "belong to the ages" because of the learning and wisdom he brought to bear on problems that are both immediate and perennial. Yet he belonged to us, too, and we to him, and it is still too soon, I think, for some of us to read his work alone for its manifold intrinsic merits. Rather, we stare at a page and out leaps Bickel in full conversational cry, sounding like a slightly annoyed hive of bees, snatching a quotation from here or there, rolling phrases around, trying this one and that. "The flow of words," his friend Robert Bork called it, which in flood scarcely brooked agreement, let alone contradiction, for a moment evokes the man himself.

His loves and loyalties ran deep, but very much to persons and to real institutions, not to abstractions. He was devoted to many of his colleagues and students at the Yale Law School, for example, and to the Harvard Law School from which he received his legal education, and whose faculty called him to the Holmes lectureship in 1969. A portrait of Felix Frankfurter, for whom he clerked, hung in his study, and a charcoal sketch of his father, easily mistaken for a portrait of the son, hung in the Bickel living room. The elder Bickel, a lawyer and a Yiddish journalist and poet, brought his family to New York from Rumania in 1938, when Alexander was fourteen. It is not inconceivable that some of the passion in Bickel's categorical rejection of the "inalienable" and "natural" character of citizenship was the reciprocal of his unaffected embrace of the United States at a relatively advanced age.

Until near the very end of his life, Bickel spoke seldom of his early years. Life, for him, evidently began in New York, with the City College, the U.S. army, and at the Harvard Law School. He spoke English—he learned it as his fifth language—utterly without accent of any kind—neither Rumanian nor New York nor Harvard—and in an interview a few years before his death mentioned that he read Conrad a great deal.

He paid admiring and amused attention to the theatrics by which people presented themselves—the tactical use of middle names, for example, or the way one dignitary fiddled with his glasses entranced him, as an exercise in subliminal persuasion. I believe that his own shortness of stature annoyed him on this account, since he may have thought it imposed a limitation upon his capacity to rivet attention, when his argument demanded. He needn't have worried; his voice, a marvelous instrument, really, could fill a room without difficulty, and his manner of dress was imposing—altogether a formidable front, and one he attended to quite knowledgeably and, since it was a mark of his identity to do so, quite without cynicism.

He was also a lover of ceremonies, which he viewed as the "punctuation marks of life, which help us to parse and possess our lives rather than being simply rushed along by them." Ceremony writ small, is of course gamesmanship, and life's little opportunities for gamesmanship (no matter who was temporarily in the lead) brought him a connoisseur's unending delight. He repeated, for example, the remark of the bartender at the no-nonsense downtown San Francisco grill who looked him up and down one spring evening. There stood Bickel, a vision of tourism, resplendent in a tan outrageously coddled by a year at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford, hair slicked back, sunglasses, double-breasted blue blazer complete with gold buttons, ice-cream pants. The bartender handed over two extremely dry martinis and leaned forward to inquire, "How's everything in L.A.?"

For people who knew Bickel at all well, there is no temptation to credit his high-mindedness to an incapacity to see the seamier, more manipula-

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tive, side of things. Rather, his life was the product of choices, consciously made, and the costs paid in full. If it was a good and constructive life, it was because he, with the very considerable aid and comfort of his wife Joanne, made it so.

IV

IT NO LONGER takes the percipience of a Tocqueville to observe that in America, at a quickening pace these last two decades, political disagreement has more and more turned into legal disputation and even constitutional debate. And so more and more we have needed the guidance of commentators grounded in the law and, if possible, enlightened by an understanding that runs beyond the capacity to parse cases and partakes of a well-thought-out political vision, a vision that places legal issues in a historical and philosophical setting.

Good scholarship in constitutional law has always attempted this complex and challenging task. But as the polity at large has begun directly to grapple with such issues as school prayers, reapportionment, school desegregation, busing, benign quotas, and legal requirements on the political process itself, the need has accelerated for discipline and craftsmanship in the framing of issues and the justification of measures in the public arena. Otherwise we stand in peril of conducting our politics without the guidance of principle, or letting our principles, untutored by the legitimate concerns of politics, degenerate into demagogic slogans. "Our problem has been, and is most acutely now," wrote Alexander Bickel, "the tyrannical tendency of ideas, and the suicidal emptiness of a politics without ideas. . . . Our problem, as much as Burke's, is that we cannot govern, and should not, in submission to the dictates of abstract theories, and that we cannot live, much less govern, without some 'uniform rule and scheme of life,' without principles, however provisionally and skeptically held."

In one or another of our great law schools there remain first-class constitutional lawyers. Some of them—not many—are in Alexander Bickel's league. In one or another of our great forums of opinion there are a few—painfully few—commentators who display depth of understanding and who work to consistently high intellectual standards. Yet nobody quite matches the texture of Alexander Bickel's thought, and especially on the range of issues where his resonant voice was the one so many of us waited to hear. On nearly every page of *The Morality of Consent* one feels with undiluted poignance the bleak truth of Robert Bork's observation that the loss of Bickel's further work in political philosophy is an incalculable national loss.

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Not All Jewish Families Are Alike

A Story

Johanna Kaplan

THERE was only one policeman, very young, his hands already on the steering wheel, by the time Merry got down to the police car. Holding out a pack of Chiclets, he said, "Want a piece of gum?" as if he were a casual acquaintance, someone's friend or downstairs neighbor agreeably giving her a lift because they were going in the same direction.

Much too quickly Merry said, "No thanks," and because she was sure there had to be *some* protocol, *some* formality that would relieve them both of this strained unreality—slipping so rapidly through familiar city streets—she said, "I'm Merry Slavin. His *daughter*." Because on that point there had already been enough confusion.

The policeman, practically a parochial-school kid, red-haired, with the painfully fair, blue-white iridescent skin of redheads—the same color skin as Isobel's, though Isobel had never, even as a child she said, had red hair—the policeman nodded, but did not really look at her. Glancing through the rear-view mirror, he said, "Sorry about the noise here, but it'll give us speed, and that's the purpose." The sudden sound of the siren and the smell of his peppermint gum fell through the car simultaneously; Merry turned and stared out the window, her eyes continually catching and keeping signs and stores as if it were a movie whose subtitles she could easily assimilate, but whose internal sense she would never really grasp.

The purpose: only an hour before, Merry, dressed to meet her father for dinner and waiting for his phone call, had fallen asleep on the living-room sofa. She had changed early on purpose, hoping that by putting on a new dress she would prevent herself from falling asleep. This dress, which was Indian, and dark blue with the customary intricate, multicolored Indian embroidery across the front, would annoy her father because it was a dress and therefore an implicit bourgeois demand; because it was Indian, thus taking jobs away from mere subsistence-level American workers and encouraging the exploitation of Indian ones even poorer; and because its embroidery was machine-stitched—a once vital folk craft now brutally cut off from its real source, and so cheapening to a whole culture. But the dress itself, now wrinkled and sweaty, had not stopped her from falling asleep, an old habit she could not break. "Somnolence is a primary symptom of anxiety," was one of the first things her analyst had ever said to her, and Merry felt this to be true. She did not like it herself and yet could not stop it. Waking up from an undesired sleep in the late afternoon always left her with a detached gloomy sourness that did not go away for hours. Her father looked at it differently, however, having written of certain Impressionist paintings, particularly Cézanne's, that they gave you the same unique sensation as did waking up from a nap: out of a haze, you suddenly saw ordinary everyday objects as if only half-formed. They were in the process of being born; it was a discovery, you saw them newly. Not that he especially cared about Impressionist paintings, or art of any kind for that matter. What he valued above all was the sense of seeing something as you had never seen it before: through child's eyes, a discovery.

This was exactly what Merry knew he was doing as she waited for his phone call—he was walking slowly, hazily through Manhattan streets he had been through a hundred times before. Maybe this was one of the times he had gotten off at an unfamiliar subway stop by accident, or on purpose. It didn't matter; it would come to the same thing, especially now that he no longer lived in New York. A half-smile was on his face as he stared and wandered: he was seeing something old and familiar in a new light, discovering something he had never previously noticed, or—who could tell?—possibly even finding something that was actually new. In a little while, over dinner, his eyes glazing with delight behind his glasses, he would be telling Merry about a new discount drug store in the East Twenties or a new library in the West Sixties: they would both have been there for years. It was what Merry called to herself his Rip Van Winkle syndrome, and she had once told this to Isobel, who, in keeping with her nature, had merely shrugged. But Isobel could afford to shrug; she had been divorced from Ez Slavin for years.

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Where was he now? Probably sitting over a milky lukewarm cup of coffee in an old Automat or an about to be torn down Bickford's, staring with ingenuous fascination at someone's left-over racing form, or happily fingering what he temporarily regarded as an ingenious new ketchup dispenser. With the clothes he wore and the way he looked, he would fit right in—and this was Merry's worst fear: that without trying, without even knowing or caring about it, her father would turn into a Bickford's bum. Especially since she had just finished writing a piece on Potter's Field, this thought put Merry to sleep, and when the phone rang, startling her into partial wakefulness, she saw that the dye of the dress had come off, running purplish blue onto her arms.

But the ringing phone was not her father; it was the police.

"Mrs. Ezra B. Slavin?"

"This is *Miss* Slavin," Merry said, so instantly annoyed that alarm did not reach her. "It is *not* his wife. I'm his daughter."

"There's been an accident, Miss," this police voice said, against a background of terrible noise and headachy buzzing. "Mr. Slavin's been taken to Bellevue. We're sending over a squad car now. It's on special orders."

Once, from a neighbor, Merry had heard a story about a woman who had received a similar phone call, but it was about her ten-year-old son and had come from the police department of the suburban Long Island town to which they had only just moved. It was for the sake of this son that they had moved, the woman was always apologizing: he had been mugged on his bike once too often. On a new bike, in his new town, the boy was run over by a car. When the phone call came, his mother had had to take the Long Island railroad all the way out to Hempstead. "I knew he was dead," she had kept on repeating numbly, when people spoke to her afterward. "They wouldn't tell me anything, but all the time I was sitting there on the train I knew he was dead."

WHEN the police car pulled up at the emergency-room entrance, Bea Shestak, exactly the same, still streaky-blond and florid-faced, jumped out at Merry and embraced her. "Oh my God," she sobbed. "We didn't even know he was in New York! He wasn't even listed as a speaker! Your *father! Ez Slavin!* He was just *standing* there, just standing on the edge of the crowd. If one of the Peace Committee marshals hadn't recognized him, he might have been lying there for hours. He didn't even have any identification, Merry. All he had was an old library card!"

"Well, he doesn't *have* a driver's license," Merry said. "And you know what he thinks of credit cards. Anyway, he's always been against identification, Bea. He thinks it's an intrusion of the state. I only hope he has Blue Cross or something. He certainly can't afford to stay in the hospital."

Staring into the distance, Bea Shestak said, "He died for his principles. He was never any different. He was always, always modest and he never changed his convictions."

"He's *dead*?," Merry said. "Just *dead*? They told me there was an accident."

"There was no accident," Herb Shestak said, stepping forward, nervously fingering his glasses. He was nearly totally bald now, but his beard had grayed only slightly. "Your father had a heart attack. A massive coronary. He was dead by the time he got here."

"DOA," Merry said, and looking around at the ambulances driving up and the crowd of white-uniformed doctors, nurses, and attendants walking in and out—one girl with a stethoscope around her neck was brushing her hair as she pushed through a swinging door—she thought suddenly of how her grandfather had died. The police had found him, too. "Was your father a man of means?" said the cop who had battered down the door to her father and his older brother, Uncle Bloke. Whispery groups of Chinese children stood in the newly-made entranceway; their alien smells had bothered the old man, their tight, slanted eyes reminding him of the Mongolian tribesmen of his whole freezing Siberian childhood and youth, causing him to call out, "Tartar! Kalmuk!" when he saw them from his window or on the stairway. *"Means!"* exploded this uncle called Bloke, a giant, red-faced, crude-featured man, who had acquired his nickname in childhood from hanging around the Irish. "Would a man of means have lived in this shithouse?"

"I'd like to call Isobel," Merry said, having no idea whether or not she was making any sense. "What time is it there?"

"Isobel? What is she *talking* about, Herb? What time is it *where?* Merry, darling, you're the next of kin. You have to make the *arrangements.*"

Herb Shestak said, "Isobel Rees—you know that writer he used to be married to. *The Blood Curtains.* She lives in England."

"She lives in *Italy,*" Merry said coldly. It was Isobel who was cold, her father always said, and she thought of how angry it made Isobel when people connected her solely with that one novel, which, made into a movie, brought her unexpected, temporary fame and permanent public association with a work whose tone and characters she could hardly even recognize. "I just want to talk to her, but not if it's the middle of the night there. Maybe she *would* come here because she does come sometimes anyway. But I'm not the next of kin."

Bea Shestak began to cry again and hugged Merry so tightly that she could smell her perfume, or maybe it was only lotion or some kind of make-up. Why had Bea worn perfume to a demonstra-

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tion? Her father did not approve of perfume, of any cosmetics at all; it meant she had succumbed to the seduction of advertising even if she only used blush-on or a little lipstick, which she needed because she looked like him and was sallow-skinned.

Tearfully, Bea said, "I *know* how awful it is for you, Merry. And shocking. But I wish you would cry instead of being so overwhelmed. Because there are things you'll have to *do* now. . . . When Herb's sister died, she was cremated too, so at least that's something we know about. And the newspapers. . . ."

"He doesn't believe in cremation, Bea. And besides, I am *not* the next of kin."

"My God, Herb! Look how upset she is! What are we going to do? She's not even *thinking*. Of *course* he believed in cremation, and honey, Isobel has nothing to *do* with this. They were *divorced*. It's a *legal* thing. That's why those—those other girls—your sisters? Your half-sisters? Paula's girls—*you* know who I mean. Of course, you'll have to call them if you know where they are, but they're not *legally*, I mean he wasn't actually ever *married* to their mo—"

"He had a son with Isobel," Herb said. "I forgot all about it."

"Nicky?" Merry said. "I think he's supposed to be in India, I'm not sure. They were hardly even speaking." She was aware suddenly of feeling extremely tired. "I mean Jeannie. That's who I should really call first."

"*Jeannie?*" Bea screamed.

From somewhere in back of her, Merry felt a light tap on the shoulder and a soft, nearly whispering woman's voice, oddly foreign, saying, "Mrs. Slavin?"

"No, *Miss* Slavin," Merry said wearily. "His daughter." And turning around, saw that she was facing a slight, very pretty Filipino girl, no older than herself. A stethoscope was shoved into her pocket; the name-tag on her jacket said Concepcion Lopez, M.D. She looked hesitantly at Bea Shestak, and then, to Merry, said:

"There was no question of primary cause. You won't need a coroner. . . ." She stopped abruptly and Merry stood there waiting, caught in the lilt of her voice, which was almost hypnotic. "The seizure was so massive, didn't he have a history? Suspected coronary events? Warning signs?"

"I don't know," Merry said. "I have no idea." Because when would her father have gone to a doctor? He had never believed in doctors, had not viewed medicine as a science. But then he did not believe in science.

The loudspeaker, which had been broadcasting constantly, a nearly unintelligible flat, metallic squawk, now burst out:"Dr. Lopez, Dr. Concepcion Lopez, Dr. Zwerling, Dr. Michael Zwerling, Dr. Lopez."

"Excuse me," Dr. Lopez whispered, and having already stepped away on her equally whispery, tiny shoes, she turned back and with sudden, surprising, shy urgency said, "I saw your father once. In Cambridge. We went to hear him speak, but it was so crowded they put us in an overflow room. When he found out later there were people who didn't get in, he took us with him to a special reception. We—we weren't even invited and he talked to us specially." She looked more and more embarrassed, and said finally, "I'm very sorry."

He slept with her, Merry thought instantly. Another one. He had asked her about the rebel fighters in the Philippines, listened to her lilting, hypnotic whisper, and decided entirely in his own mind that she would return in comradely bravery only to the furthest of the out-islands, a tiny, remarkable, healing heroine.

Bea Shestak clutched dramatically at Dr. Lopez's white jacket, her eyes filled up again, and said, "Thank you, dear. He was always the same, the same with everyone. That's why this grief will be so shared. You have to *think* of that, Merry, it will *help* you. Now the shock and pain is yours, but the grief will be shared by so many."

Merry said, "I better call Jeannie. I suppose she should really know first. *She's* the next of kin, Bea. She's his wife."

"That little *girl*? In Massachusetts? The one he brought back from Kentucky? Merry, he wasn't *married* to her. You're not thinking straight."

"He *was* married to her," Merry said uncertainly, because of course there were all those years when he hadn't been. "They have a child, a little boy."

"Herb, did you know about this? Is it true? He got married up there in Massachusetts? And has a son? Is she rational? Maybe we should call up Dave Roizman and he'd give her a tranquilizer. Or *talk* to her. *Some*thing."

"He did have a baby," Herb said slowly. "And I suppose that's with Jeannie. But I didn't know he was married to her. I guess it's perfectly possible."

PERFECTLY POSSIBLE. As ambulances careened in and out and sirens wailed, Herb Shestak waved his glasses in the air; it was undoubtedly the gesture he was accustomed to using in front of his classes when he was considering with just, reasoned gravity the varied but perhaps equal claim on truth of two opposing theoretical arguments. After all, on the one hand, but then, there was always, not to be dismissed, on the other: perfectly possible. Merry felt a wave of her father's contempt for Herb Shestak, for academics, for sociologists, for Herb Shestak who had always been this same one thing from a young man on—a teacher and a sociologist—and then recalled that her father had rarely made a living until he had gotten university jobs, and in a field usually called American Civilization or American Studies, not so different from sociology. And how much of a living had he made even then? Merry

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could not tell. He had found and embraced rural poverty when he met Jeannie in Hazard, Kentucky, and had lived up to what he considered its truth in a ramshackle farmhouse in northwestern Massachusetts, even these days when his commute had been to Amherst. But this was not entirely fair: he had always preferred being poor to having a real job, and did not care who had to share in his choice without having made it. None of the women he had ever been involved with, from Merry's mother on, had, according to him, truly understood the nature of his choice. Only Jeannie, Jeannie who could not possibly have known the difference because she had lived all her life in real, dire, unelected poverty, had not minded, and he had elevated what she knew as the sole and natural condition of human life to be its highest form—and moved to the country. And to a remote and isolated place in the country at that. What about urban vitality? The streets and neighborhoods teeming with real life, the community of men?

Slavin—Ezra Benjamin. Suddenly, in New York City on March 12, 1974. Husband of Georgeanne. Father of Merry, Nicholas, and Samson. Funeral private. Memorial meeting to be announced.

What if obituaries were true? Not whether some man whom casual and musing obituary readers did not know had *really* been a beloved husband, devoted father, adored grandfather, and dear brother. That much of a romantic Merry wasn't. Assume, say, that this beloved husband had muttered to himself and slammed doors, that the bereaved wife, now suddenly a woman in a shocked and lonely panic, had spent years listening to him rant all the while she made the salad, and then with the carrot scraper still in one hand, had run to the phone to complain, half-laughing, to her sister and a few friends. A few minutes later, anxiously bustling around drawers and cabinets, she would call out, "I *told* you we're out of saccharin," and this blast would bring forth the beloved husband, who had closeted himself first in the bedroom where he got bored, and then in the bathroom, where he turned on all the faucets, including the shower, and stood there letting the water run to clear his head. A little sheepish now, he would yell back, "It's all right, I have," and from his pocket out would come a few packets of saccharin he had picked up one day in a luncheonette or cafeteria or even in a Pennsylvania Turnpike Howard Johnson's from the last time they had taken a trip. This habit had always annoyed the devoted father's children, whom he easily embarrassed, but not his adored grandchildren who came to consider it cool, especially as they approached adolescence. They could hardly believe that someone had thought up this trick before them, above all in their own family. Meanwhile, in their scrupulously psychoanalyzed dreams, the devoted father's children disguised him variously as a blustering tyrant in a Nazi uniform or a helpless paralyzed man wrapped in the pathetic terry-cloth of sickness or infancy. They could not forgive him his terrible rages and perpetual remoteness. And the dear brother? Well, there was one sister whose husband he'd had a disagreement with over cemetery plots, nearly forty years before. His older brother lied about money and boasted about his children. And his youngest sister, the baby in the family and a beauty, had, for no reason that anyone could figure out, gone crazy at an early age, still complaining from time to time about the hidden, whirring machines in the walls which prevented her from going to sleep.

So there was one family's possible story extracted from the ritualized words of mourning. Because it was not this part of the obituary that Merry ever imagined to be truthful. But what if just the ordinary facts were true? That this unknown mourned man, exactly as the newspaper death notice said, had left a wife, two children, five grandchildren: those were their names, there was no one left out, there was nothing inaccurate. What then should her father's death notice say?

Slavin—Ezra Benjamin. Husband of Georgeanne Blaikie Slavin, Isobel Rees Slavin Giobbi, and the late Pearl Milgram Slavin. Father of Dr. Jonathan Spivak, Merry Slavin, Nicholas Slavin, Francesca Meisel, Susanna Meisel, Samson Slavin. Grandfather of Adam and Miranda Spivak and Mountain Spring Meisel.

WHAT could casual, musing obituary readers make of that?

But they would never have to try, because anyone who did turn to the obituary page that morning would find a two-column spread with a photograph, headed "Ezra B. Slavin, Iconoclastic Social Critic, Dead at 64."

Ezra B. Slavin, the writer, editor, and social critic who was Visiting Professor of American Studies at Amherst College, died last night in New York City after suffering a heart attack. He was 64 years old.

Mr. Slavin, a frequent contributor to many magazines and journals since the 1930's, was an unconventional and often controversial figure throughout his life. Often associated with and claimed by the Left, both Old and New, Mr. Slavin disavowed specific political ties, saying, "Labels and pigeonholes are useless and distasteful. All they can do is hinder growth and solidify enmities. They bring comfort to all enemies of intelligence and hopefulness." According to his own account, he was by nature and temperament an anarchist and pacifist, and though he shunned the appellation political activist, he often demonstrated and fought for those causes which reflected his beliefs.

From very early in his career, Mr. Slavin was harshly critical of the anomic trends of urban,

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mechanized American life, yet his vision of the city as a place of "limitless, tumultuous possibility" was a lyrical, even celebratory one. "I have had a lifelong affair with the idea of America," Mr. Slavin once said. "And when people find that difficult to believe, I remind them of that flintier vision which is bound to result when love is unrequited." A man of wide-ranging interests (he wrote about a diversity of topics ranging from the outlaws of the early West, whom he viewed as forerunners of the Populist movement, to the influence of psychoanalysis in the 50's, "Psychoanalysis and Everyday Life," to the proliferation of fast-food chains in cities and suburbs), Mr. Slavin's essays were always characterized by the insistent inclusion of his personal likes and dislikes. "Unlike journalists and so many intellectuals of his generation, Slavin does not eschew the 'I,'" a New York *Times* reviewer wrote of his last book, *Three Chairs in the House,* "thus happily endowing his work with the indelible mark of the passionately personal." But this very quality did not always win him praise; he was accused by some critics of "iconizing the trivial and profligately idiosyncratic in the name of cultural criticism." To this charge, Mr. Slavin responded with a characteristic blend of charm and bellicosity. "I have an ulterior motive," he told an interviewer. "I actually want to move people. To change the way they perceive and live their lives."

Mr. Slavin, whose own life and ideas have often been cited as a precursor of those propounded by the New Left and the "new consciousness," was born to Russian immigrant parents on New York's Lower East Side. Noting that he was one of four sons, Mr. Slavin wondered, referring to the well-known passage found in the Passover Haggadah, whether he was the wicked son or the simpleton. Certainly he was a rebellious one, having attempted to run away from home many times. "When I was five years old, I hid in an ice-man's wagon, but it was drawn by a horse and he didn't go any farther than the other [Brooklyn] side of the Williamsburg Bridge. By the time I was eight, though, I was a little smarter and I managed to get as far as Connecticut." But his most daring childhood exploit occurred when, at the age of ten, he attempted to stow away on an ocean-going freighter. He was discovered, however, and sent home on a Coast Guard cutter from what was probably Long Island.

Though an unwilling and infrequent student, he was a graduate of P.S. 12 and De Witt Clinton High School, at that time located in Manhattan. He latter attended City College, but he did not complete his studies and never received a degree. After a brief apprenticeship in photoengraving, a trade he was to work at at various times in his life, Mr. Slavin found employment in the Writers' Project of the WPA. It was at this time that he acquired the reputation for having what a colleague recently described as "the original crash pad," and even many years later his Upper West Side apartment was very often a stopping place for several generations of friends, students, and admirers. It was not until the mid-1960's, however, that he emerged from relative obscurity, becoming a figure of widespread appeal, especially to the young. He did not find this role entirely congenial, explaining that though he had always throughout his career urged governments, groups, and individuals to "simplify" in the interest of truthfulness and clarity, too many of his young students appeared over-willing to simplify ideas and history, unwittingly pursuing what he termed "that great American goal, fake pragmatism." Mr. Slavin also deplored his sudden loss of anonymity, a condition which he viewed as an absolute prerequisite for "an honest day's thought."

Mr. Slavin's first book, *Outlaws and Citizens,* was a study of such frontier outlaws as Jesse James, the Dalton Brothers, Belle Starr, and Billy the Kid. He was also the author of several collections of essays: *A Career in Itself, The Aboriginal Name, Stranger in the Land,* and, most recently, *Three Chairs in the House.*

He leaves his wife, the former Georgeanne Blaikie, a daughter, Merry, and two sons, Nicholas and Samson.

Three Chairs in the House: "I had three chairs in my house; one for solitude, two for friendship, three for society" (Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*). There were three chairs on Ez Slavin's torn screen porch on the day the photograph which accompanied his obituary was taken. Not one of them had cushions or offered comfort of any kind, though Francesca Meisel, not yet the mother of Mountain Spring, had spread her quilted sleeping bag over the hard wooden seat and cracked ladder-back of the chair on which she was sitting. Ordinarily, of course, she would have sat on the floor as Peter, her boyfriend, was doing, but Ffrenchy had just had an abortion and she could not seem to make up her mind exactly how much attention she wanted paid to it: abortion was about to become legalized in New York State. Also, as it happened, it was Ffrenchy's third abortion, and her mother, Paula, with whom Ez had had two daughters but had not married, nor ever really lived with, was running out of sympathy. This was part of the reason Ffrenchy had come up to see Ez in North Darby: her mother was nagging her constantly to settle on some form of birth control and her adopted father, Al Meisel, was a doctor—obviously *he* couldn't possibly be expected to understand. Anyway, he was extremely dogmatic and bull-headed, Ffrenchy said; in fact, he was a Taurus, and so she saw no point in getting into arguments with him.

It occurred to Merry that Ffrenchy, who was beautiful anyway, might be even more beautiful when she was pregnant. She resembled her mother in a certain, open-featured, lusty look, but while Paula's attractiveness came from a faintly sloppy, very dark, exotic quality which she had always

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cultivated, Ffrenchy was fair, like the Slavins. Except that unlike any Slavin Merry had ever met, Ffrenchy had high coloring: pink cheeks, made pinker now from the sun, and very long, thick brownish-red hair, almost auburn.

"Tauruses *love* arguments," said Peter, who did not stay crouched on the floor but was constantly getting up, moving around, and shifting positions as he clicked his camera. Which was *his* purpose in being there that muggy weekend: he was taking pictures of Ez for the dust jacket of his new book, an arrangement that had been thought up by Ffrenchy.

"This is Peter Honig and he's a *terrific* photographer," she had said when the two of them, with backpacks and sleeping bags, had walked in, neither invited nor expected. "What he's starting to get into is radical documentaries, and he's been very influenced by *you,* Daddy. He really admires your work. I mean, he *loves* it." She beamed but said this "Daddy" tentatively, because to begin with, it was what she had all her life called Al Meisel, and moreover, because she knew that Merry, whose acknowledged and legitimate Daddy he was, called him Ez.

She will always hate me, Merry thought, as Ffrenchy looked past the screened porch, and taking in her presence, instantly misinterpreted it.

"*Oh!*" Ffrenchy said bitterly, "*Merry!* . . . I read that thing you wrote about illegal immigrants in New York, those Haitians. What a weird thing to get into. I mean, they could really zap you. *You* know—voodoo."

"Well, I didn't write *against* them," Merry said, glaring and tightening immediately. "I only wrote *about* them."'

Peter Honig fingered the camera which temporarily hung around his neck. He had clearly not counted on there being such awkwardness in a weekend he must have been so much looking forward to, but he was determined to stay loose. Very loose, in fact: as he bobbed up and down with his camera, his exposed penis bobbed out before him from the folds of a kimono which he either couldn't or wouldn't close. The kimono was not his; he was wearing it because his own clothes were still wet from his morning in the flooded basement. Early that morning, it was Jeannie who had first discovered what was then still just a puddle, a leak—Jeannie up doing the laundry, Jeannie up feeding the new baby, crying, tiny, Sammy Slavin. At breakfast already looking distracted and entirely disheveled, she stacked dishes in the sink and said finally in a hesitant, unhappy twang, "I think there's something wrong with the pipes? . . ." From her tone, it was obvious that this had happened before—and ended in disaster. Probably they couldn't pay the plumber, Merry thought. And as the baby, who was supposed to be sleeping, suddenly began crying, Jeannie said pleadingly, "Ez, we *can't* call that plumber in town. And anyway, it's Sunday."

THIS atmosphere of domestic chaos and helplessness which her father always engendered, but from which he himself could remain remarkably immune was exactly what Merry could not stand. So she said with false cheerfulness, like a camp counselor, "Oh, I bet there's an emergency plumbing service somewhere. In Amherst, in a bigger town."

Ffrenchy, who was still drinking orange juice, having recently given up coffee because as an addiction it was as bad as alcohol or nicotine, that was the first point against it, the second point being that all caffeine-ingesting societies, and this included both coffee *and* tea, were into a truly destructive and down trip—Ffrenchy said, "What's broken? Plumbing? Don't worry, Peter can fix it. Peter can fix *anything.*"

"Ah, omnicompetent," Ez said happily. It was a word he liked and a concept he was genuinely devoted to.

Peter said, "I don't know. . . ." and it was impossible to tell whether he was expressing false modesty, decent and perhaps legitimate doubts, or whether he simply did not know the meaning of the word omnicompetent. "I mean I'm not really into pipes. What I'm great with is electricity. Wires."

"You fixed that shower, Peter," Ffrenchy crooned at him. "When we were staying at André's. And I was taking a bath." She offered up a smile of broadcasted intimacies: herself rosy and naked in a bathtub, a wash of wanton sensuality, her lover with high boots and competent hands entering in to fix the shower-head and complete the bath.

Peter scratched at his ponytail and repeated, "I don't know," but he went down to the basement, where he tapped too long at a bursting pipe and got drenched.

Which was why on the porch that afternoon, Peter was bobbing up and down in a kimono, prompting Ffrenchy to giggle gleefully, "Oh, Peter! You're a closet flasher!"

She is torturing me with her bursting sexuality, Merry thought. Because I am seven years older and have never had an abortion. Because I am hardly younger than Jeannie and have never had a baby. Because she knows I am fastidious in these things and was brought up by Isobel. She will always hate me and there is nothing I can do about it. Merry sat rigidly forward; she *had* to, the chair was so cracked and rickety, but it was an exact imitation of the stance her father had so often ridiculed in Isobel.

"You can have another chair," Jeannie said uncertainly as she walked through the porch laden down with the morning's laundry which she had decided, finally, to hang outside. "From the kitchen?" Her voice slid up into a question when no question was intended; probably it was only her accent, but there was a kind of perpetual, worried, birdy nervousness about Jeannie that made

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her seem, especially when she spoke, like someone who was always asking questions whose answers she knew she wouldn't have time to stay around for.

"Don't worry about it, I'm fine," Merry said. Because the last thing she wanted was a chair from the kitchen. Covered in yellow oilcloth, dirty, sticky, and sour-smelling—that particular smell of poverty, old age, and slovenliness—the chairs in Jeannie's country kitchen could easily have been castoffs, refugees from Merry's grandmother's apartment on Rivington Street. This grandmother, Ez's mother, was dead for years now, but she had been gloomy and half-blind even when Merry was very small and had lived with her. Those chairs so instantly summoned up her whole tiny, fetid apartment—bathtub in the kitchen, cockroaches wherever you turned—that Ez, noticing the look on Merry's face the first time she had seen the kitchen in North Darby, said, "My daughter Merry, the compleat bourgeoise! It's these chairs, isn't it? Your very own madeleine. . . . If only you could find some joy in the memory, some pleasure."

"How could I?" Merry said irritably. "And since when do you? And you didn't even live there when I did, when she was so old and worn out."

Ez turned to Jeannie and said, "That's how it is, parents are always villains. It's an old story."

Embarrassed before Jeannie, Merry said, "I didn't *say* you were a villain. I'm only asking for a certain base line of honesty." And thought: I'm only asking for *what*? From *whom*?

"*Base line,*" Ez repeated sourly, his features contorting as if he were struggling suddenly with a surprise attack of indigestion. "Base line! My God, Merry! The gobbledegook of social science! Is that why you went to college? To learn to debase the language? So you, too, could help erase spontaneity?"

"I didn't know you were the French Academy. And what are *you* doing taking the side of purists? I thought you always argue that *they're* the ones who kill spontaneity."

"That's more like it!" Ez said smiling. He was showing her off to Jeannie, whom he now put his arm around, announcing cheerfully, "In my family, there's never a lack of contention."

Jeannie looked at Merry uneasily and said, "There's only instant coffee? I hope you don't mind it, I just know there are some people who do. From the college? We were having coffee on the porch and they, they . . . well, some people sure do."

On the porch, which three years later had still not been repainted or improved in any way, Peter Honig clicked his camera and Ez's family went on proving its contentiousness.

Ffrenchy said, "I *know* Tauruses love arguments. That's exactly why I wouldn't get into it with him. I mean, why give him the satisfaction? He always gets this *look* on his face—his creepy, boring, uptight look. Like he *knows* he's right. Like there couldn't be any *question*. I mean, *everybody* knows that birth-control pills are bad for you, it's not even a matter of opinion! And he has the *nerve* to sit there with his statistics and tell me that I'm listening to alarmists! And that the danger has been exaggerated. *Exaggerated!* I mean, shit! The man does not care about what happens to my body!"

Which was surely not Ffrenchy's problem: she sat there with her Mexican wedding blouse half unbuttoned and her long and beautiful reddish hair spilling out against the khaki dullness of the sleeping bag, looking, pleading, for Ez's attention.

Ez Slavin was sitting on the third chair on the porch, a rocking chair. It was not broken. He leaned back, occasionally rocking slowly, staring, apparently preoccupied, at motes of dust or filtering sunlight. With each careful rock, he varied his expression: he was trying to look natural for the camera.

"I know what you mean about doctors," Merry said, and heard her voice sounding reasonable—reason, the infamous and sickened enemy of passion. "They're always ready to tell you statistics and never mind that you're the one who might turn out to be on the wrong end."

"That is *not* the point, Merry!" Ffrenchy screamed. "I'm trying to explain what kind of *person* my fa—, Al is. It has nothing to do with your bullshit intellectual *theories* about doctors!"

From inside the damp, reeky house, the baby cried. That baby was the reason Merry was in North Darby that close, hazy June weekend. She had come up to see her newborn half-brother, surprisingly named Samson after a grandfather, who, out of all Ez Slavin's children, only Merry had known. But hardly remembered: he had paid even less attention to her than he had to his own children, and spent his last years living alone, separated from his wife of a lifetime, reading and re-reading his collection of old Russian books (the *Classics,* her father said scornfully), apparently mourning a country which had certainly never mourned him, and bitter against anything which had once interested him. *Yeder mentsh iz a velt far zich alayn,* he had answered anyone who criticized him: every man is his own world, and had emerged each day dapper and lordly to buy rolls and a newspaper amid the noisy filth of the Lower East Side.

That was one Samson Slavin, Shimshon, Shimsheh her grandmother had called him, and here now, red-faced and crying, was another. Why had Ez decided to name this son of his old age Samson? What new wrinkle on a constantly reinterpreted past had he managed to come up with for this one?

"Hey, baby. Hey, little baby, baby," Peter said in a singsong, as if he were stroking and talking

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to an overwrought animal—a horse who had just heard a firecracker or a dog who kept on mistaking an uneasy delivery boy for a mugger. The child's persistent crying was disturbing Peter's concentration.

Ez said, "Poor Sam. . . . Already wrestling with the Philistines."

"I think it's the heat," Merry said sharply, as Jeannie could be heard running up the stairs, calling out helplessly, "Oh, Sammy, sweet little baby boy Sammy."

Ffrenchy shifted forward, this time looking only in Ez's direction. She said, "Actually, even my mother agreed with me about the Pill. It was only him. But then they both started bugging me to get a diaphragm. Well, I *hate* diaphragms, I hate the way they *feel*. It inhibits me, Ez. Do you know what I mean? It's not natural."

EZ TURNED his chair only slightly, he was still not looking at anyone, but with his face in shadow, continued to stare at ordinary air with such removed and saintly intensity you could easily imagine that an invisible air-molecule morality play was now going on in front of his glasses. Speaking very slowly, reluctantly, as though he could hardly bear to tear himself away from his private entertainment, he said, "Abortion isn't natural, Francesca. In the literal sense. Against nature. Against life."

Ffrenchy shrieked out, "*Daddy*!"

Peter stopped fussing with his camera and Merry said, "I didn't know you were against abortion, Ez. Since when?"

"You don't mean since when have I been against killing, do you, Merry? You don't mean since when have I been unable to oppose an act that's directly against life?"

"Oh my God!" Ffrenchy howled. "How can you *say* that? What are you *talking* about?"

Ez looked up, wondering, and *click* went Peter Honig's camera. It was that expression, no longer so remote and saintly, but almost boyish in mischief and surprise that stared out at Merry one morning three years later from the obituary page of the *Times*.

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The Riddle of Dos Passos

Joseph Epstein

Is it possible to read and admire a political novel without one's own politics getting in the way? Can a Populist read Henry Adams's *Democracy*, with its aristocratic tone and elitist views, without becoming enraged? Can a Marxist give a neutral reading to Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*? To take a more recent example, what of E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime*? Here is a novel one can admire only if one shares its general line—that at least from the turn of the century America has been a cruelly capitalist and hideously racist country. If one does buy the line—as so many of Doctorow's reviewers did, to the point in many instances of not even recognizing that the novel had a line—then there appears to be no limit to one's enthusiasm for the novel. But if one does not buy the line—finding it, to put it gently, simple-minded—then Doctorow's immense novelistic energy and invention seem a sad waste, a case of good talent being spent on bad politics. It is useless to deny that politics do not influence literary judgments—they do, regularly and decisively.

This is not to say that one's own politics need always crucially influence one's reading of political novels. One can, for example, imagine the same person admiring such politically dissimilar novels as Dostoevsky's *The Possessed*, Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*, Tolstoy's *Resurrection*, and Malraux's *Man's Fate*—all of which come at the political subject from different points of view and tend toward radically different conclusions. One can even detest a novelist's politics and still find profit in his novels. In this connection Bertrand Russell once said of D. H. Lawrence that "His descriptive powers were remarkable, but his ideas cannot be too soon forgotten." That is very good as far as it goes; in fact it is not for his ideas that Lawrence is most worth reading, but for the shades of feeling he evokes, the pent-up emotions he exposes and looses in his characters, the sense of crisis in culture he so sharply conveys. What is crucial to the judgment of political novels is not only the extent to which a novelist's politics are intrinsic to his work, but the extent to which in his work he is incapable of transcending them—for to that extent, if one does not share these politics, one is scarcely likely to bear to read the work.

A case very much to the point is that of John Dos Passos, America's most unrelievedly political novelist through his long career till his death in 1970. No other literary career in America has been so subjected to extra-literary, to essentially political, judgment than Dos Passos's. Perhaps no other novelist suffered in his lifetime so precipitous a drop in literary esteem. Dos Passos was one of the four major novelists of the 1920's—the other three being Sinclair Lewis, Ernest Hemingway, and F. Scott Fitzgerald—and of them all, time has dealt most harshly with Dos Passos. Hemingway and Fitzgerald are still large items on the cultural agenda of the young as well as of those who read them when young. If this is less true of Lewis, he yet remains an established author in university curricula, and *Main Street* and *Babbitt* continue to be taught for their documentary interest.

Dos Passos, though, is largely ignored. Although his productivity did not fall off appreciably, he was in fact neglected over the last three decades of his life. No Nobels, no Pulitzers, no academic revivals came his way. Neglect so complete must have been especially embittering to a novelist who in his younger days was considered central, and not by Americans alone. D. H. Lawrence wrote of Dos Passos's novel, *Manhattan Transfer*, that it is "the best modern book about New York that I have read." Jean-Paul Sartre came forth with heavier praise. "I regard Dos Passos," he wrote in 1938, "as the greatest writer of our time." After 1940 no names of equal weight offered similar endorsements. Even in death, Dos Passos was partially ignored: having the bad luck to die on the same day as Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser, he was deprived of the Great American Writer obituaries that might otherwise have been his. As a character in one of his novels says: "Funny t'ing a man's life."

What went wrong? What went wrong, the conventional reading has it, is that Dos Passos went Right. This in any event was implied in the post-mortem articles about him, most of which pointed out the alleged superiority of the early to the late Dos Passos: the superiority of the novelist who wrote the trilogy *U.S.A.* over the novelist of reactionary views, the Goldwater supporter, the contributor to *National Review*, the admirer of astronauts. Dos Passos himself anticipated these articles when still alive. "When the meaning of political slogans turns topsy-turvy every few years," he wrote in his memoir, *The Best Times*, "anyone who tries to keep a questioning mind, matching each slogan with its real-life application, each label with the thing itself, has to put up with having old friends turn into unfriends and even into enemies."

And so indeed did friends regularly turn. Hemingway, with whom Dos Passos broke over the Spanish Civil War, described Dos Passos in *A Moveable Feast* as a "one-eyed bastard" (Dos Passos lost an eye in an auto accident that killed his wife) and blamed him for causing the breakup of his, Hemingway's, first marriage. Edmund Wilson, in *Upstate*, chimed in: "[Dos Passos] seems to want to become now very

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much the kind of man who once aroused his indignation, a member of the comfortable propertied class, an upstanding American citizen. He used to like to shock people by his radicalism, now he tries the same with his conservatism—but the latter seems as puerile as the former." This is revealing, for Wilson, as a critic, did not regard Dos Passos's earlier radicalism as in the least puerile. Far from it. Of *The 42nd Parallel,* the first volume of *U.S.A.*, written when Dos Passos was at the height of his leftist phase, Wilson wrote that "From the point of view of its literary originality and its intellectual interest [it is] by far the most remarkable, the most encouraging American novel that I have read since the end of the war." Politics, it appears, can affect literary judgments even retroactively.

JOHN DOS PASSOS was predestined a loner. The fact of his birth is notable. He was born in 1896 and his parents were married in 1912. He was a bastard, but an upper-class bastard—one who went to school in England, then to Choate, and thence to Harvard. His father, son of a Portuguese immigrant shoemaker, was a wealthy and famous lawyer. His mother, Lucy Addison Sprigg, was of relatively high-born Maryland stock. His parents did not marry because Dos Passos's father was already married to a woman in poor health whose slow death delayed for sixteen years John Dos Passos's legitimacy. In his early years he went by the name of John Madison. His mother was sickly, suffering from Bright's disease, and his childhood was spent in hotels both here and abroad—very good hotels, to be sure, but his boyhood, glimpses of which are offered in *Manhattan Transfer* and *Chosen Country*, was staggeringly lonely. The Commodore, as Dos Passos, Sr., was called because of his passion for yachting, picked up the tabs. A large man of generous spirit, a big spender decked out in cavalry mustache and overcoats with lavish fur collars, Dos Passos's father combined democratic idealism with plutocratic instincts—as a lawyer he had helped put together some of the first railroad trusts. If one were writing a Freudian scenario, no more appropriate father could have been found for a man who till the age of forty was America's premier left-wing novelist.

The political novelist could not have been easily discernible in the boy. The young Dos Passos spoke in a mid-Atlantic accent that made him a goat among his classmates at prep school, wore steel-rimmed glasses over myopic eyes, and was terribly earnest. At Harvard, he wrote for the *Harvard Monthly*, which put him among the coterie—it included E. E. Cummings and Robert Hillyer—known locally as the Aesthetes. This side of Dos Passos was irretrievably banished when he went abroad for World War I, in which he served first with the gentlemanly Norton-Harjes Ambulance Service and, later, with the American Red Cross in Italy. Among other assignments, it was his job to cart out of surgical theaters buckets of arms and legs amputated from the wounded. His first novel, *One Man's Initiation—1917*, is filled with the haunting horror of war, and is pacifist in inspiration. Back in the United States, he enlisted in the army as a private, though the armistice was signed before he could get to the front. His days as an enlisted man were the first extended time not spent among members of his own class. Revealing an inkling of the political personality that was developing in him, he wrote to his friend, Arthur K. McComb: "You can't imagine the simple and sublime amiability of the average American soldier—Here is clay for almost any moulding. Who is to be the potter? That is the great question." He wrote about these days in his novel, *Three Soldiers*; this time the inspiration was hatred of large bureaucratic organization.

In the 1920's and early 30's Dos Passos's life recapitulated the highlights of the American artistic and political avant-garde: Diaghilev and the Ballet Russe, picketing in Boston to save Sacco and Vanzetti, the Provincetown Players, Harlan County with Dreiser, Gerald and Sara Murphy at Cap d'Antibes, Greenwich Village, the obligatory trip to Soviet Russia, skiing with Hemingway in the Austrian Alps, *The Dial, The New Masses* (his name dots the pages of Daniel Aaron's *Writers on the Left*). While still very much the loner, he was nonetheless a man who was where the action was and who, in addition, bestrode both the political and the artistic worlds. This joining of the artistic to the political is one of the things that made the early Dos Passos so appealing a figure. Along with being the most educated of the writers of the 1920's, he was also the most *engagé*.

It would be an exaggeration to say that Dos Passos was a modernist master, but no one was more adept than he at applying modernist techniques to politically radical purposes, and nowhere did he succeed more securely at doing this than in *U.S.A.* Whitmanesque in approach, Gibbonian in scope, it is a book that sets out to tell everything about America (its protagonist, as Alfred Kazin once pointed out, is American society itself) and it is the most ambitious single literary work ever undertaken in this country. Its influence, though obviously momentous, is perhaps impossible to gauge precisely. The novelists of the 1920's, whether they wished the role or not, were important teachers, each with a specific lesson. Sinclair Lewis taught loathing of the small town, business, and the middle class. Hemingway taught a narrow yet enticing code of manliness. Fitzgerald taught style in social and personal life, even if his teaching was often riddled with the snobbishness of a Middlewestern Irish Catholic. Dos Passos taught how to think about politics, and his instruction featured hatred of large organization, sympathy for the underdog, and the belief that society is a machine that twists and crushes, forcing some men to sell out, others to knuckle under, while grinding most face first into the slime. Such at any rate was the catechism *U.S.A.* provided.

U.S.A. is a young man's novel—written by a then-young Dos Passos and best read when young. A distinct recollection of when they first read it, and under what conditions and with what effect, is very common among people who read it between the ages of sixteen and, say, twenty-four. So furious is its en-

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ergy, so passionate its sympathies and hatreds, that it is all but impossible not to be swept up by it, captivated, hypnotized, enthralled. In later years one may forget the characters and the working out of its five separate plots, but one never forgets its impact. It is the kind of book that changes people's lives.

POSSIBLY because *U.S.A.* had the momentous effect it did, many people could never bring themselves to forgive Dos Passos for what they took to be his political *volte-face* of later years. He was the sentry who left his post, and so deserved to be shot. Here is where the problem of the political novel emerges. The late Dos Passos, the disaffected Dos Passos, was a dogmatist of the Right, or so his critics on the Left contend. Yet the early Dos Passos, the *engagé* Dos Passos, was every bit as much a dogmatist of the Left. But in both these aspects he was a dogmatist more of the pen than the person. He could never, for example, bring himself to take the final step of joining the Communist party, which ardently wooed him through the early 1930's. As a novelist, Dos Passos was almost always a polemicist. With only a few not very successful exceptions—*Streets of Night*, portions of *Chosen Country, The Best Times*—his writing required a target to fire away at: war, bureaucracy, industrialism, big business; and, in his second phase, the New Deal, the fellow-traveler mentality, liberal culture. As a novelist he could not quite cut it without a polemical edge.

Richard Chase, in an interesting review-essay on Dos Passos's novel *Midcentury* in these pages,* attempting to pinpoint where Dos Passos had gone astray in his fiction, remarked that "he annihilated the sensitive, suffering, aspiring young hero, a projection of himself, whom we meet in the earliest books." Chase continued: "In later works the Dos Passos figure is either moved into the periphery or rather violently transmogrified into the itinerant 'working stiff' or political seeker. Thus the early books with their vital interplay between the young hero and society came to be replaced by books which lack the author's immediate, personal, and emotional sense of the happenings he describes as they bear upon his most cherished inner aspirations."

This seems a misjudgment of both Dos Passos's talent and his ambitions. On the first count, though he could do a great many novelistic things well, Dos Passos had almost no gift for literary intimacy. He could look only so deeply into his characters, and no further. When he projected a Dos Passos-like figure, he tended to think and sound rather like second-rate Hemingway. (Chase, moreover, was writing at a time when introspection seemed the only legitimate route for the novelist to travel; today there is a good deal less patience and tolerance for the "sensitive, suffering, aspiring young hero.") With very little gift for the intimacy of introspection, Dos Passos was preeminently the novelist of the middle distance:

> When they woke him to come down to dinner the whole family was assembled. Terry didn't know which of the women to kiss first.
>
> The place was to hell and gone out a long avenue encumbered with truck traffic. It was so dimly lit it looked at first as if there were nobody there.
>
> It was still night when they tumbled out of the plane at the Miami airport with two hours to wait for the Nassau flight. They sat mumbling and blinking in the harsh electric light of the airport café sleepily trying to choke down some breakfast.

These three short passages, taken from different parts of *Midcentury*, strike the characteristic Dos Passos tone and distance. It is the manner of the novelist of society rather than of the psyche. If one intends to cut a wide swath, as Dos Passos did, viewing himself as a historian of contemporary society and thus responsible for writing about the broadest range of characters in the greatest variety of situations, then there are limits on the depths to which one can descend. Not all novelists are Franz Kafka, and Dos Passos never wanted to be.

AS IT happens, *Century's Ebb*,† Dos Passos's final and now posthumously published novel, does have a character of the kind Chase called for. Jay Pignatelli, though got up for this novel as a lawyer, is an obvious fictional representation of Dos Passos himself and is the same character who was at the center of *Chosen Country*. As the novel begins, Pignatelli is a man interested in Left causes, who is contacted to work out the arrangements for shooting a documentary film on the Spanish Civil War (as Dos Passos was asked, along with Ernest Hemingway and Lillian Hellman, to help write a script for such a film). Pignatelli's experience in Spain parallels Dos Passos's own. The novel recapitulates his break with Hemingway, who in this novel is portrayed as a writer named George Elbert Warner and is treated very gently considering Hemingway's abominable treatment of Dos Passos in *A Moveable Feast*. Warner (Hemingway) wants to feature the militaristic aspects of the war in the film, while Pignatelli (Dos Passos) wants to feature its hunger, suffering, and general desolation.

As in the novel, so in life. During the Spanish Civil War Dos Passos either found or lost religion, depending upon one's political point of view. The key incident, recapitulated in the novel, was the execution during the war of a dear friend of Dos Passos's, a Spaniard, probably killed by the Communists fighting on the Loyalist side in their eagerness to snuff out Trotskyists and the Trotskyite influence on the Left. The incident was eventually to put an end to any further transactions between Dos Passos and the Left. " 'The question I keep putting to myself,' said Jay trying for a mild reassuring tone, is 'what's the use of fighting a war for civil liberties, if you destroy civil liberties in the process?' " To which the Hemingway-figure, George Elbert Warner, retorts: " 'Civil liberties shit! Are you with us or are you against us?' "

When Dos Passos got around to answering that question, he chose to be against them, decidedly and determinedly. In *Century's Ebb*

* "The Chronicles of Dos Passos," May 1961.

† Gambit, 474 pp., $9.95.

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the Hemingway figure tells Pignatelli: "I don't care how good a law practice you have, or liberal reputation or what the hell. These people know how to turn you into a back number." These people were of course the Communists and the Popular Front. Did they in fact turn Dos Passos into a back number, or did he accomplish the job under his own steam? The answer is that they, the Popular Front, and Dos Passos, all seem to have done the job together.

It has been said that, while John Dos Passos changed many of his opinions, his point of view never really changed at all. Thus John Chamberlain, writing in *National Review* shortly after Dos Passos's death, remarked: "He often shifted his opinions on new evidence, but he never changed his emotional disposition toward instruments of power. They were to be kept on a short leash, whether they were run by capitalists, Communists, labor leaders or whomsoever." But can the accretion of opinions finally change a point of view? In John Dos Passos it appears to have done so. Richard Chase wrote: "A self-proclaimed 'Jeffersonian,' Dos Passos has preached ever since the New Deal that we must decline every gambit of political power. This may be quixotic as political theory, but it is morally sound and not likely to damage the imagination of the novelist." It need not damage the imagination of the novelist, but in Dos Passos it did. Chase says, rightly, that there was something of the pamphleteer in Dos Passos. He was a black-and-white man, without much taste for chiaroscuro. As he grew older he took on a number of views that are generally classified as reactionary, including, as it turns out, an admiration for Senator Joseph McCarthy. But reactionary views alone do not suffice to explain what went wrong. On the reactionary scale, alongside Dostoevsky, for instance, the late Dos Passos was a Weatherman. Among modern writers, Evelyn Waugh held more strongly conservative views than Dos Passos perhaps ever contemplated, yet these views did not in the least damage the quality of Waugh's fiction.

The reason Dos Passos was a better novelist writing out of a Left than out of a Right political perspective has very little to do with any inherent superiority of the Left over the Right, or of the Right over the Left; a careful reader of novels, after all, might justly conclude that both sides, in the forms their argument have taken in America in this century, are equally remiss in supplying an adequate picture of the variousness of life in our time. In Dos Passos's work, however, the move to the Right was disastrous because it encouraged a monolithic view that gave vent to his greatest weaknesses. The early Dos Passos, though every bit as doctrinaire as the later, was at least split in his novelistic preoccupations between anger at what he deemed the enemy and sympathy for the victims. As long as there was sympathy, there was a real interest in characters; and as long as there was a real interest in characters, the pamphleteer in Dos Passos, while never quiescent, was at least firmly subordinated to the novelist. In the later Dos Passos, sympathy is drained, the interest in characters becomes chiefly an interest in their roles as targets for his contempt. The pamphleteer is in the saddle, and the novelist has all but disappeared.

In *Century's Ebb*, Dos Passos is down to three kinds of character—self-indulgent swindlers (usually young), true-believing liberal dupes, and happy capitalists. (In *Midcentury* this cast was increased by two: labor leaders, all of whom are corrupt, and their victims, all of whom are shiningly virtuous.) His biographical portraits, so dazzling in *U.S.A.*, have here become editorials, and as such they provide no surprises. Walt Whitman, Joseph McCarthy, Robert Hutchins Goddard (inventor of the rocket), John Foster Dulles, James D. Watson, George Eastman, all get high marks; so does George Orwell, another biographical subject who also appears briefly in one of the novel's narrative sections, but only for being correct on the Spanish Civil War, with no mention made of his socialist side. Low grades, predictably, go to Henry Wallace, Wendell Willkie, John Dewey, Lee Harvey Oswald, and Malcolm X. Specific opinions are offered on foreign policy and on welfare. A man is of course entitled to his opinions, as many and as shrill as he cares to make them, but a novelist is not—at least not so explicitly as Dos Passos offers them in the course of his later novels. "Politics in a work of literature," said Stendhal, "is like a pistol-shot in the middle of a concert, something loud and vulgar, and yet a thing to which it is not possible to refuse one's attention." The problem with Dos Passos's later novels is that so many shots go off that one no longer hears a note of music.

While one might disagree with nearly all of Dos Passos's discrete opinions, it is still possible to recognize a good man behind them. Dos Passos is revealed in his letters as without malice and without pettiness. However strident his tone, he had a saving grace which emerges in brief flashes of humor or unexpected fairness. In the middle of a root-and-branch attack on John Dewey, for example, he can say, "He was an intensely kind man." He asks the right questions: "Here, now, today, if you came back to us, Walt Whitman, what would you say?" Yet he also gives in too easily to the need to supply answers.

"Major artists and writers," said Chekhov, "should engage in politics only enough to protect themselves from politics." As with love, career, family, or any other form of human striving, politics are an entirely appropriate subject for the novel, but only insofar as it becomes, like the others, an arena in which men and women work out their destinies. For Dos Passos it became—perhaps it always was—an instrument for conveying correct information. "All right so we are two nations," the younger Dos Passos wrote, and before he was finished he had served them both. A man of good heart and ample talent, he was all his life ensnared by politics. He had set out to chronicle the life of his time with an ambitiousness and a fervor unmatched among American writers. He ended not by being our chief chronicler, as he had wished, but instead himself part of the sad story.

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Wagner Comes to Broadway

Samuel Lipman

THE New York City Opera is presenting Richard Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* in English this season at the New York State Theater, and in so doing it has put us in its debt both by the quality of its work and by making it possible to raise issues which might otherwise remain unconsidered.

The performance I saw represented the very pinnacle of the City Opera's achievement and its contribution to our cultural life. Fresh young faces, attractive voices, excellent orchestral playing, authoritative conducting, and band-box staging: taken all together, these virtues conveyed a conception of the opera which was in the best traditions of the American musical theater. Wagner's music was heavily cut, thereby enabling the performance to end a full fifteen minutes before the magic hour of midnight at which the orchestra begins to collect overtime. The cuts naturally telescoped the action of the opera and speeded up the pace of the performance. The opera in this way became more palatable to an audience not schooled, as was the German audience for which the piece was written, in the virtues and duties of obedience and endurance.

The great innovation of this production was its presentation in English. We are told that this English version is the work of John Gutman; I was struck by the fact that the libretto I bought in the lobby before the performance began—translation by John Gutman—coincided only partially with the words actually sung by the singers, and there seemed no obvious explanation for the many discrepancies. Many of the words, when they were sung against a thin orchestral background, were clear and perhaps would have been of help to someone who did not know the plot well. Both translations—the one sold and the one sung—seemed adequate to the purposes of the production, which I take to be to present a pleasant, comfortable *Meistersinger*.

The problem of opera in the vernacular, involving as it does the relationship in opera between music and words, is a difficult one. Indeed, Richard Strauss made this relationship the subject of his last opera, *Capriccio*. His characters discuss, endlessly it sometimes seems, the question: First the music, then the words, or first the words, then the music? Who is to say? The balance shifts, as the talents of the contributors interact. The balance cannot and should not be defined, for in its vagueness lies the possibility of fresh creation.

No one would dispute the point that, for an audience which knows the piece, opera is ideally presented in the language of its composition. This is of course most obvious when the text is itself a work of literary art, such as Strauss and Hofmannstahl's *Elektra* and *Rosenkavalier*. It is probably even true when the text is only a peg on which to hang the tunes, as in the case of many of Puccini's masterpieces. For the composer cannot help but be influenced by the sounds of the words he is setting, the vowels and the consonants, the internal rhythms of the words and their order, the rhetorical associations of all the elements of his own mother tongue.

But this is, and must remain, a counsel of perfection. There is a long tradition of vernacular opera production, of *Aida* in German, of the *Nibelungenring* in French, of *Boris Godunov* in Italian. There was even a practice, now I think dead, of mixed performances—of artists in a single production each singing in the language in which he learned the piece. And the audience seems to become just as attached to the tunes when heard in the vernacular as when heard in the original. So, as a general rule, an argument can always be made for doing opera in the local language. If such a procedure enables the singers to feel more comfortable, the audience to follow the actors more easily, difficult problems of nationalistic dislike for a foreign language to be avoided, then one might feel justified in looking for a translation that works—that is singable, understandable, and accurate.

To be sure, opera in English is a special case, because English seems an unrewarding language in which to sing. It is difficult to enunciate clearly, and its vowel sounds do not easily lend themselves to the kind of Italianate vocal production now so much in fashion. The training of most American singers, furthermore, is mainly in the use of foreign languages, not their own. Still, one can say quite safely that the same rule applies to translation into English as it does for other languages: if it works, use it.

It remains to be seen, however, how well *Meistersinger* fits into this general rule of toleration. For this opera is a special case both in the world of opera and in the world of Wagner. The pragmatic question—does it work?—cannot so easily be asked of translation here as it can with so many other operas.

TO SEE what makes *Meistersinger* special, we must ask what happens in the opera. Its plot is simple, as such things go. It is set in Nuremberg, an old German town of medieval houses, the historical Mastersingers guild, and the historical Hans Sachs. The story concerns an offer, made by a rich goldsmith, Veit Pogner, of his daughter Eva's hand in marriage to the winner of a singing contest to be chosen by

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the Mastersingers guild, of which Pogner is a leading member. He has been led to make this offer by a desire to show that contrary to what the bourgeoisie is accused of throughout Germany, the worthy burghers of Nuremberg value art over money. A young noble, Walther von Stolzing, who has fallen in love with Eva (and she with him), immediately sets about trying to win entrance to the Mastersingers guild in order to be eligible to compete. He is, however, rejected as unfit by the Mastersingers and particularly by Sixtus Beckmesser, their keeper of the rules, who himself wishes to compete for Eva. The wise shoemaker, Hans Sachs, also a member of the Mastersingers guild, but moved by Walther's talent, advises him on a suitable song for the contest; he then tricks Beckmesser into stealing the song and palming it off in the contest as his own. Beckmesser makes such a botch of it that Sachs is able to get the assembled judges and people to allow Walther to show the way it should be sung. He does, wins by acclamation, and the opera ends with the lovers united and Sachs singing to the audience a plea for the preservation of German art.

Attractive stuff—almost a plot for a Broadway musical or an operetta: boy meets girl, youth triumphs over the spite of the mean through the help of mature wisdom. And that was what the City Opera production showed us —all the people as pretty as in a mail-order catalogue, and the music as tuneful as Lehár. But if that is the story of *Meistersinger* on the level of Broadway and the musical theater, it must be pointed out that another drama takes place in the opera on the level of those social, aesthetic, and political ideas to which Wagner devoted his life. The great arch of that other drama spreads from the speech in which Pogner offers his daughter's hand near the beginning of the first act —and which in Gutman's translation reads:

wherever German land I tread,
I find with indignation,
we're rarely praised and have
instead a miser's reputation.
I've heard it from both high and
low; I'm sick of hearing it
wherever I go
that we have bargained and
sold our lives and souls for
gold.

—to Sachs's peroration, written by Wagner in the decade of the Franco-Prussian war and the Prussian unification of Germany:

Beware! Us threaten evil days:
If our great German realm
decays,
When foreign powers rule the
land, no prince his people
will understand,
if foreign sham and foreign lies
should ever darken German
skies;
What's German and true could
not abide, were't not for
German master's pride!
I beg of you: honor your German
masters, thus you will ban
disasters!
And if you have their work at
heart, though fall apart
the Holy Roman Domain, there
still would remain
The holy German Art!

The keystone of this great German arch is Beckmesser, the keeper of the rules. Wagner, in creating Beckmesser, was making an attack —which he did not attempt to disguise—on the most famous and respected German-speaking music critic of his time, Eduard Hanslick. Wagner, like most of the musical world of the time, thought Hanslick to be Jewish (which he may or may not have been); this supposed Jewishness and Hanslick's rejection of Wagner's later music were for Wagner two sides of the same coin. The Jewish Hanslick's dislike of the German Wagner's music neatly illustrated Wagner's conception of the relationship between the Jews and Germany in general. Wagner went out of his way to point out this moral to Hanslick. In a late draft of the libretto the character finally called Beckmesser in the opera is called Veit Hanslich, and Hanslick himself was present at a reading of this draft by Wagner in Vienna in 1862.

What makes Beckmesser loathsome in Wagner's conception is not that he is physically ugly, sings badly, or is old. His crime is that he has nothing of his own. So he must criticize, and what he cannot destroy by criticism he must steal, and what he steals he turns into nonsense. This is of course exactly how Wagner saw the Jews in his essay, *Das Judentum in der Musik* ("Jewry in Music"), which he first published anonymously in 1850 and then presented under his own name in 1868, the year of the first performance of *Meistersinger*.

The Jew as Wagner portrays him in this notorious tract possesses no culture of his own; at best he can only sing and talk in the language of the bazaar. Out of a mixture of tolerance and sloth, the Gentile world allows the Jew to compete for and win the highest prizes. Such tolerance is noble, but it is extended at the cost of bondage to the Jew and the degeneration of a once-pure civilization. What the lascivious Beckmesser wants from the Mastersingers and from the virginal Eva is precisely what the Jew wants from the Gentile world: domination and the joy of corruption. Thus Beckmesser is not only the villain against whom the beautiful lovers must struggle; he is the link between Wagner's homely story of young love and Wagner's socio-political ideas. It is the evil represented by Beckmesser upon which Wagner relies to unify the two strands of his opera.

THIS is the background against which it seems to me the New York City Opera production must be judged, if it is to be discussed not merely as a performance of music in the theater but also as an instance of the kind of attempt being made to realize a great work of art at this time and in this country. Against this background, then, the first aspect of the production to be questioned must be its use of English rather than the original German. *Meistersinger* is not only an opera in German; it is the supreme example of a German opera. It was seen that way by Wagner, and it has been seen that way ever since by the most diverse social, political, and intellectual groups, of whom the Nazis and the Communists are only two. It uses a deeply German cultural background; it bases itself on an old German situation; it glorifies the city of Nuremberg (which indeed has figured notoriously in the political history of this cen-

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tury); it contains many specific mentions of Germany; and it ends with a hymn to the German nation. For a character to speak in English of the Germany evoked by this opera as if he were a German is to be placed in a false position: that of a man who is seen to be lying as, with the greatest passion, he asserts his truthfulness.

This problem of being German in English arises most forcefully at the end when Sachs warns of the coming of evil days in which foreign princes who do not speak the language of their people will rise to power through lies and sham. The Sachs at the City Opera was spared most of the problem by the ruthless cutting of this final speech, Wagner's musical setting of his political testament. Whoever decided on the exact location of this cut accomplished the resulting joint in a harmonically clumsy way not worthy of such otherwise fine musicians; more important, the loss of these emotion-laden lines, placed by Wagner against a thin orchestral background so that every word would be clear to the audience, also deprived the opera of its intended ending. All we had left as a remnant of Wagner's larger reasons for composing *Meistersinger* was one poorly declaimed, weakly sung, and orchestrally covered mention by Sachs of "holy German art" capped by an ending sung by the chorus, which—because of the limitations on clear enunciation inherent in any large group of singers—could only be rendered unclearly.

There can have been no purely musical justification for cutting a passage which is musically necessary, beautiful, and a traditional showpiece for great performers of the role. But other, extra-musical arguments for this cut can of course be made. Leaving aside for later the problem of the sheer unpleasantness of the words, these arguments would seem to number three. The thoughts themselves, being German, are not properly conveyed in English; the passage is often cut in performance, even when it is done in German at the Metropolitan; Wagner himself wished to cut the passage, and only retained it at the passionate urging of his wife Cosima. The first argument is really only an argument against doing this particular opera in English. The second argument seems weak, because if a practice is a mistake it remains so regardless of the number of times it is made (as Toscanini is once supposed to have said: "Tradition is the memory of the last bad performance").

As for the argument about Wagner's real intentions, it is more difficult, for it immediately involves us in complicated questions of scholarship (who said what to whom, and how do we know it?) and psychology (what was Wagner's relation to his wife and to what extent was she capable of changing his mind?). These questions are fascinating, if only because their answers are unknowable. We do know that the passage is there in the final score Wagner approved for performance and publication; we do know that the music which clothes these words is a serious and distinguished example of his genius; we do know, as has been pointed out by Robert W. Gutman in his brilliant *Richard Wagner: The Man, His Mind, and His Music*: "Wagner wanted *Meistersinger* produced in the city it celebrated because he saw this ancient seat of German tradition as a bulwark against Jewish influences." Furthermore, far from seeming increasingly irrelevant with the passage of time, this speech has remained not only meaningful to audiences—witness the German reactions to it during the period of Hitler—but also to the artists who have sung it.

THERE are three large-scale historical recordings of *Meistersinger* which may illuminate this problem. These recordings are not historical simply because of their musical qualities, though these are high indeed; they are historical because they were recorded during live performances taking place at important moments of German political and musical history. The first recording, of extended excerpts, was made in 1928 on the 115th anniversary of Wagner's birth, at a performance in Berlin's *Unter den Linden* Theater. The Sachs was the great Jewish baritone, Friedrich Schorr, and the conductor was Leo Blech, a Jew who was allowed by Goering to remain as a performer in Germany almost until the outbreak of World War II.* The second recording (the first complete *Meistersinger* on records) was made at the Bayreuth Festival of 1951, the first to be held after Germany's defeat. It was conducted by Herbert von Karajan and had Elisabeth Schwartzkopf as Eva†; both of these great artists had, as is well known, been active in the musical world of Nazi Germany. And the third is a complete recording of the 1963 opening-night performance at the Munich National Theater on the occasion of its rebuilding after near total destruction by an Allied bombing raid in 1943.** Germany on the eve of Hitler, the first Bayreuth Festival after defeat, the reopening of a national treasure destroyed by enemy bombs: it was *Meistersinger* that served to commemorate these moments for Germany.

All these performances have an atmosphere in common—something composed of aggressive pride and noble arrogance. In all of them the final speech of Sachs is retained in full and serves as the climax of the drama. Each Sachs—Schorr (the greatest), Otto Edelman in the Bayreuth version, and Otto Wiener in the Munich recording—is betrayed by the music, the ideas, and the occasion into an excess of emotion on the phrase *Was Deutsch und echt* ("What's German and true"); each feels compelled to stress the word *Deutsch*, each time it appears. This, one feels, is the real *Meistersinger*, the *Meistersinger* not of Broadway and the United Nations, but of Wagner and Germany. It is in being performed in the spirit of Wagner and Germany that the opera becomes more than a collection of tunes and songbirds, and becomes what all art aspires to be, a rival of life.

Of course a recording, while it can convey much of the musical performance, can convey little of the acting through which an oper-

* Available only on a private recording, but a similar if emotionally muted performance by Schorr and Blech is on Seraphim 60189.

† Seraphim 6030.

** RCA LSC-6708 (withdrawn).

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atic character must also be portrayed. Beckmesser must be acted more than he must be sung, and here lay perhaps the chief weakness of the City Opera production. If the argument about Beckmesser's significance which has been advanced here is right, it follows that he must be presented as a villain, not only personally but socially, not only individually but as a symbol of the crime of the Jews against the people. If this is done, all becomes clear. It is then only proper that he is beaten up in the riot which closes Act II; it seems just for Sachs to trick him into using Walther's song as his own; it is inevitable that he should turn the pure, lofty sentiments of the original into the kind of gibberish which Wagner thought the fate of all Jewish imitations of Gentile culture; his public humiliation, suffering, and disgrace at the close of the opera may be seen as a triumph of restraint and humanity rather than an expression of spite. For against the enemies of the people all crimes are virtues, and all attempts at conventional virtue are crimes. These enemies of the people—and a distinguished line from Wagner to Amin has thought the word Jew described them all—are animal rather than human; as Himmler put it in a speech to SS leaders in 1943, virtue itself lies in the necessary crime:

> It is completely wrong for us to offer up our ingenuous soul and spirit, or good nature, or idealism, to other peoples. . . . Germans are after all the only people in the world who treat animals decently, so we will also know how to treat these human animals. . . . I can tell you, it is hideous and frightful for us Germans to have to watch such things [executions]. . . . It is, and if we would not find it hideous and frightful, then we should no longer be Germans. Hideous though it is, it has been necessary . . . let us not weaken. . . . To have gone through this and—except for instances of human weakness—to have remained decent, that has made us tough. This is an unwritten, never to be written, glorious page of our history.

Of course, *Meistersinger* is not Bergen-Belsen; of course Wagner was not Himmler or Hitler; of course Beckmesser is only beaten and disgraced, not murdered. But those were gentler times, and the real audacity of pioneers often seems a cautious conservatism to distant successors. Is Wagner to be blamed for Nazism, for the murder of countless millions? He can only be blamed for what he did, not for what others did after him. What he did was to provide the shoulders on which others stood. Perhaps he could not have known what they would do when they stood there, but they were his shoulders.

How was Beckmesser performed at the City Opera? Not as a villain but as a fool, not as evil but as tormented, not as corrupt but as untalented, not as lascivious but as anxious. In short, as a figure of pathos mixed with fun, a clown, a pitiful, gently comic misfit. His fate —to be beaten, hissed, and rejected in love—was made to seem inexplicable, having been caused by none of his observed actions. For all he was shown to have done was lose a contest.

The City Opera production, then, misrepresented the social and political context of the opera in three ways: by performing it in English, cutting material of the greatest significance, and distorting the role of Beckmesser. By neglecting the ideas of the opera, moreover, the production inevitably transformed the music itself into a springtime frolic.

Why did this happen? How did this splendid group of musicians and theatrical people come to present so sanitized a version of *Meistersinger*? Certainly those responsible must have felt the force of practical considerations. The City Opera does have a reputation for bringing opera to the people, for making popular opera easily available and for making difficult opera popular. It has attempted to cast attractive young American singers in roles traditionally reserved for European artists of greater experience. As an American company it naturally is prejudiced in favor of English as a medium of expression. It is only reasonable for the City Opera to try to do what it does best —to bring the tradition and resources of the American musical theater to bear against the greatest of European opera.

The question then becomes why *Meistersinger* was seen as a proper field for the exercise of the company's undoubted virtues. There does exist a large area of the operatic repertory in which the City Opera has made a unique contribution to the history of operatic performance and production. That *Meistersinger* was felt to belong to this area, notwithstanding the obvious nature of many of the considerations I have raised, says a great deal about our idea of the proper relationship in a work of art between elements of art and elements of life.

The New York City Opera was, I feel, unable to face the fact that *Meistersinger* is a blend of the beautiful and the horrid. It was unable to face the fact that both beautiful music and lofty sentiments could be inextricably mixed with implications of a political program which, in the hands of others, led to undreamed of barbarities. They did not recognize that, in art as in life, the beauty often depends on the horror. Failing to recognize this, they attempted to disentangle the two, to leave out the horror and present only the beauty.

There was a previous, and much more thoroughgoing, attempt to accomplish this impossible task. Paul Rosenfeld, an important American music critic of earnestly modernist sympathies, in an article called "The Nazis and *Meistersinger*," written shortly after Hitler came to power, accused the Nazis of taking what he saw as the healthy, democratic, individualistic nationalism of Wagner's opera as a justification for their tyranny. Wagner's nationalism, like all nationalistic art, Rosenfeld thought, was the expression of

> the national superindividual entity at the moment that entity offers to form itself freely in the union of individuals, a formation inevitably flowing from the inner liberty of the individual.

For Rosenfeld, this blossoming of the individual led

> ultimately toward . . . the "anar-

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chist commune." . . . For all artists are fundamentally "anarchists." . . . They touch material selflessly and shape it in accordance with its own nature and the idea to which it conforms; and work is a joy to them, an end in itself. And the social order to which they are natively directed could easily be an order based on the private ownership of the means of production, and the operation of those means for profit, in which labor got its just reward, and social, political, and intellectual advantages were shared by all. Such, then, is the social order adumbrated by *Meistersinger* and other great nationalistic pieces.

Such, rather, is the gospel of aestheticism—art is beautiful, art is truth, art will lead us to political, social, and moral salvation. But apart from whatever criticisms might be made of this position in general, the astonishing thing to notice is that Rosenfeld could only arrive at his reading of the ideological content of *Meistersinger* by entirely ignoring Beckmesser, whom he never once mentions. What Rosenfeld achieves by selection and distortion, the City Opera achieves by eliminating the whole question. They both transform Wagner's message of particularism and exclusion into a message of brotherhood and tolerance, a message the City Opera production reinforces by its prominent use of blacks and Orientals among the chorus and dancers without any attempt to make them up to look like members of the Nuremberg community.

Meistersinger is full of poison. It is also full of beauty. It represents the loftiest human sentiments, and implies the extinction of millions. In it, as in all the greatest works of art, there is not simply a necessary relationship between good and evil, there is an attempt at unity. It must be the purpose of artistic production and performance to present this unity in its full depth and intensity. Of course this does not, in the case of *Meistersinger*, mean that it must be performed with Beckmesser wearing a yellow star. What is implicit in Wagner's opera must not, in the fashion of certain politically conscious stage directors, be made explicit, for that too is distortion. It is only necessary that the work be presented with full awareness both of what it is and what it implies, no more and no less.

That the New York City Opera failed to do this derives from its inability—an inability characteristic of our time as a whole—to separate the realm of art from the realm of politics, to separate the fantasies of the artist from the proper goals of social policy. It is an inability to respect the integrity of art on the one hand and the political and social order on the other. Each of these realms has claims of its own and boundaries of its own, the observance of each being essential to the observance of the other. In its limited sphere, art must be total; in its total sphere, politics must be limited. All of *Meistersinger* must be fully performed on the stage; in our lives, we must resist all attempts of society at total control of man. We need not attempt to reconcile art and politics; we need only attempt to render both of them their proper due.

Theater

A Dialogue on "Travesties" or, The Impotence of Being Ernest

Jack Richardson

Scene One

The flat of Algernon Moncrieff III on East Seventy-third Street. The room has a faded elegance about it, as does Algernon. He is seated in his reading chair. He holds a copy of Roland Barthes' La Lexie n'est pas le Luxe *in one hand, while with the other he languidly stirs the contents of an exquisitely minute cup. When the door bell rings, he rises without looking up from the book, goes to the door, opens it, and returns to the chair.*

His visitor, who closes the door sharply, is John R. Worthseeker, sometimes called Jack and sometimes Ernest for purposes of plot. His aura of elegance is slightly less faded than Algernon's and his gestures, while somewhat flaccid, fall short of being actually languid.

ALGERNON. How are you, my dear Ernest? What brings you over here?

JACK. Pleasure. What else brings one anywhere?

ALGERNON *(his eyes still on his book).* Ernest, I do not ask my friends to tell me the truth—indeed I positively discourage it. However, I insist that they deceive me without my having to affect an indifference to facts that would tax the talents of a political journalist.

JACK. You find my explanation difficult to accept?

ALGERNON *(tossing his book into a pile of discarded tomes in the corner).* I do indeed, and I have a positive genius for accepting things. But when a theater critic tells me he does anything for pleasure, I'm forced to become tediously skeptical. Tell me you've

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stopped by to convert me to Buddhism or to discuss the difference between post-coital and post-Copernican despair in Cavalier poetry, and we'll have an amiable evening altogether. But to credit you, who once, on consecutive nights, sat through three Ibsen revivals, two musical comedies, and an untitled Polish happening—to credit you, Ernest, with a compulsion for pleasure, strains even my tolerance for paradox.

JACK. Still launching sour attacks on the theater? I thought you'd give it up now that it's become so fashionable.

ALGERNON. Nowadays, to flout fashion is the same as to follow it, Ernest. Both are rather sordid efforts to initiate a personality. But come, I promise not to chide you about your profession if you promise to avoid any subject that smacks of proscenium arches or alienation effects.

JACK. That will be difficult under the circumstances.

He produces two tickets from his coat pocket, separates them slowly with thumb and forefinger until they form a provocative "V," and thrusts them with a malevolent laugh at his friend. Algernon draws back in horror and dismay. His hands clutch the sides of his chair, his features twist and flutter into grimaces of pain, and a deathly pallor spreads across his face. A long soft moan of the âme perdue *variety escapes from his lips and, clasping a hand to his breast, he slumps into the stiff Spanish velvet covering of his chair and hides his eyes behind the black-and-gold Sicilian brocade of his dressing-gown sleeve. Jack shakes his head sadly at this conclusion.*

JACK. If you went to the theatre more often, Algy, you might acquire a more believable theatrical style.

ALGERNON. Any style of horror should be believable when a man of refined literary taste is assaulted with a pair of theater tickets. You could have given me some sort of warning.

JACK. Come now. You agreed two week ago to see this play with me.

ALGERNON. How much had I to drink?

JACK. Four bottles of Taittinger '38.

ALGERNON. Only four. That hardly seems sufficient for such a self-destructive commitment to adventure. Are you certain it was Taittinger?

JACK. The bottles were so marked, as was the bill which you allowed me to pay.

ALGERNON. I could understand my having promised to visit a tire factory or to tour Tierra del Fuego in the off season.

JACK *(stiffly).* You can, of course, claim the extenuating circumstance of the grape.

ALGERNON. No, as the middle class accepts the responsibilities of virtue, a gentleman must honor the obligations of vice. No doubt you've arranged for me to suffer through some sort of Third World pageant, a five-act revolutionary drama that breaks theatrical ground by each night executing the best-dressed member of the audience?

JACK. Nothing of the sort. The play is a farce.

ALGERNON *(gloomily).* Ah, a wild frolic with naked actors among the audience, and an impromptu orgy at intermission time at which orange drinks and hard candy are put to scandalous use.

JACK *(with exasperation).* Algy, this is an English company.

ALGERNON. Nowadays that is no guarantee of respectability. Why do you think I left London? I could have put up with the moral fervor that threw away our empire, the red brick universities, the Yorkshire novelists, the missing aspirants at dinner—but when the theater started to take itself seriously, I knew that I'd best take up residence in America, where vulgarity is at least softened by tradition.

JACK. You're behind the times. The English theater has for some time ceased being absorbed with the novelties of the lower class and is returning to what it has always done best.

ALGERNON. Pinero, Coward, and Rattigan?

JACK. How can you take such pride in your prejudices?

ALGERNON. How else can one make sense out of one's sensibility? I find the theater gross, meretricious, demoded, and overpriced. It caters to an audience consisting of the pretentious, who would claim significance for a street accident if they had paid to see it, and of the complacent, who would laugh at the spectacles of Caligula if the word comedy were written on the program. Oh, I don't deny that every now and then some genius, for whom the ordinary agonies of creation have proved insufficient, turns to the theater and creates a work of art, but such instances are so rare that they are best left to the curators of miracles rather than critics of art.

JACK. Well, I can't promise you a masterpiece, but I'm certain you won't be offended. The play is by Tom Stoppard, who made his debut as a dramatist with *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

ALGERNON. The three of them together?

JACK. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* was a play, as you know very well. A clever conceit about the doings at Elsinore as seen through the eyes of the famous personifiers of the marginal and nondescript.

ALGERNON. Having taken on such a mighty theme for his debut, what was left for Mr. Stoppard to attempt?

JACK. His last play, *Jumpers,* was a highly intelligent and amusing study of a Professor of Ethics at an English university.

ALGERNON. I see. He decided the marginal and nondescript were his forte and stayed with them.

JACK. *Jumpers* was a lucid, civilized, and compassionate satire that dealt with much more than logically odd propositions and the vagaries of academic fashion. It combined. . . .

ALGERNON. I'll take your word. dear Ernest, that *Jumpers* was a tragicomic mixture of *Medea* and *Principia Mathematica.* But what of the play I'm to endure this evening?

JACK. It's called *Travesties.*

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ALGERNON. At least the title's apposite.

JACK. That was worthy of a television review, Algy. At any rate, it certainly does not concern itself with human trifles. Its three main characters are James Joyce, Lenin, and Tristan Tzara, all of whom happened to be in Zurich during the last year of World War I.

ALGERNON. A coincidence they no doubt contrived for its theatrical effect.

JACK. It is Stoppard who contrived, or rather perceived, the theatricality inherent in the proximity of three such disparate points of view.

ALGERNON. Are we to believe that the author of *Ulysses,* a founder of Dadaism, and the leader of the Bolshevik Revolution kept the Zurich cafés humming with dramatic encounters and clever polemics?

JACK. Stoppard is ahead of you there, Algy. The whole play takes place in the senescent memory of one Henry Carr, the British Consul in Zurich at the time, but now a rather dilapidated *raisonneur* who keeps mixing up the events of history with a performance of *The Importance of Being Earnest* in which he played the role of . . . not Ernest, but the other one.

ALGERNON *(stiffly).* I believe *"the . . . other . . . one"* and I share the same Christian name.

JACK. Of course, Algernon. He played Algernon, the one who stuffs himself with muffins and cucumber sandwiches in between delivering such *mots* as "Divorces are made in Heaven" and "I hate people who are not serious about meals. It is so shallow of them."

ALGERNON. It seems to me Mr. Stoppard is on dangerous ground when he invites recollection of such a perfect play and such a deeply drawn character as Algernon.

JACK. Not only does Stoppard invite recollection, he positively demands it. His play, you see, uses a great deal of the structure and style of Wilde's farce.

ALGERNON. I must say I am curious. I shall go and dress. Dada, Bloom, and revolution—whatever will Lady Bracknell make of it all?

Algernon exits.

JACK. I knew Algy's interest would be aroused. Now if he will just stop calling me Ernest, I'm sure the evening will be a triumph.

* * *

Scene Two

Algernon's flat some three hours later. Jack, alone, is pacing back and forth, obviously upset. Algernon enters in the same dressing gown he wore in Scene One. He is holding a plate of tiny pizzas in one hand.

ALGERNON. Will you try one of these pizzas? I assure you there is nothing of an Italianate flavor about them. They are as bland and sodden as proper English biscuits.

JACK. I won't have it. You must say something. During intermission you did nothing but compare the audience to a fish-and-fiend salad by Bosch, and on the way home you did nothing but sing an imbecile Dada ditty.

ALGERNON *(singing).*

Dada is as dada does
When Dada doesn't do
What Dada is expected to
Donc Dada's at its dadaest
When Dada plays the classicist.

JACK. The play, Algy! What did you think of the play?

ALGERNON. You don't expect me to discuss the play, do you, Ernest? How far do you intend to exploit my weakness for Taittinger?

JACK *(withdrawing a bottle and ice bucket from inside his coat and setting them in front of Algernon).* To the limits of indecency, dear fellow.

ALGERNON *(removing a glass from the ice bucket while Jack works on the cork).* Ernest, you are without conscience. This will be the end of me in good society. It will be bruited about town that Algernon Moncrieff III drank himself to the point of offering a critical opinion of a play.

JACK *(popping the cork and pouring).* You can trust me that what you say will never leave this room.

ALGERNON *(draining the glass).* If you were trustworthy, you would not be a critic.

He holds his glass out to be refilled.

JACK. Not until I hear something resembling a coherent judgment.

ALGERNON *(speaking quickly).* Very well, I found the play diverting.

He reaches for the bottle but Jack snatches it away.

JACK. You'll have to do better than that.

ALGERNON. But my dear Ernest, why? From those like myself who understood its puns and allusions, Mr. Stoppard's play demands no heavier judgment than "diverting." Profound exegesis should be left to those to whom the doings on the stage were completely baffling.

JACK *(rising with the bottle).* In that case I'll take this over to my colleagues at the *Times.*

ALGERNON. That would be a waste. Ignorance provides its own intoxication. All right, I will go further and say that *Travesties* is a play that offers what is rarely found in the theater—literate amusement. *(Jack tips the bottle tantalizingly toward Moncrieff's glass but refrains from pouring. Algernon, after a resigned sigh, continues.)* The play combines a high degree of verbal facility with an instinct for theatrical outlandishness, the result of which is an evening that pleases both the subtle ear and the antic eye.

As Algernon has been speaking, Jack has been slowly filling his glass. It is now full, and in one exquisitely languid movement, Algernon drains it and immediately resumes talking.

ALGERNON. But it must also be said that the verbal play is not of the highest order.

JACK. What? You don't find lines like, "I took to drinking hock and seltzer at a time when nerves were fashionable in good society," of the first rank?

ALGERNON *(indicating with a languid wave of his glass that further insights must be paid for.*

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Jack begins slowly pouring). The lines are immaterial. Once one appropriates Wilde's method of investing the trivial with significance, there is no end to the number of phrases one can turn. Not that I disapprove of literary pilferage. The respect for private property is as middle-class a notion in art as it is in society. Indeed, modern literature is founded on the open avowal by both poet and novelist that they are thieves and imitators. It is the cleverness of the theft and the ingenuity of the imitation that interest us. Stoppard is not bad. Indeed, for the theater, it is astoundingly good. But compared to what I've encountered elsewhere, his parodies, paragrams, and puns are like the sermons of the lady preacher who surprised Dr. Johnson by being able to stand on her hind legs. No, no, that's not right. *(He drains the glass.)* Perhaps it was a dog that impressed the doctor by delivering a sermon in the manner of a lady preacher? No matter, what Johnson meant is that even meager achievement seems impressive where none at all was expected.

Another languid gesture with the glass by Algernon.

JACK. What absurd snobbishness. Following the line I quoted above, Stoppard has his character defend the salubrious efficacy of his seltzer and hock with the words "post hock, propter hock." To appreciate the joke, one needs a knowledge of Latin and logic, not to mention an ear for palatal endings. Where in your precious modern literature is there a pun that provides more pedantic enjoyment than this?

ALGERNON *(rapidly).*

O bright Apollo,
Tin' andra, tin' heroa, tina theon,
What god, man, or hero
Shall I place a tin wreath upon?

Or perhaps,

Reality to Plato was a noose,
To Kant a dingy dish,
Hume found that to inhabit it,
Is all mankind can wish.

JACK *(pouring).* There are not a thousand people who could find those bits of doggerel amusing.

ALGERNON. What do we care about numbers? Mr. Stoppard obviously didn't when he wrote *Travesties.* He set out to produce caviar for the general; that it turned out to be paté for the major is still no mean achievement.

JACK. But what of the ingenuity with which he used the structure of *The Importance of Being Earnest* to enclose the facts and fantasies of history?

ALGERNON. It worked very well. If Wilde's method amused by making the trivial seem significant, then there is no reason that it shouldn't succeed in trivializing the significant. To set forth ideas on art and revolution in the badinage and milieu of farce is a brilliant conception. But. . . . *(He drains the glass.)* Stoppard finally found it all a bit unmanageable. He did well enough when it was aesthetics he confined to the farcical ambience of a gentleman's flat, but Lenin and revolution, I'm afraid, proved too unwieldy, and forced him to change styles in mid-play. Now one may in a work of art change one's mind, but never one's style.

JACK. Surely you saw that those parts dealing with Lenin were meant to be a satire on Brechtian theater?

ALGERNON. What has that to do with anything? Besides there are depths of dullness that are beyond satire's grasp, and I'm afraid Stoppard sank in the attempt to reach them.

JACK *(pouring again).* Weren't you impressed by the way such a cerebral conceit was made theatrical?

ALGERNON. You mean all the running about and sudden outbreaks of song and dance, and Joyce singing limericks in a jacket festooned with shamrocks? That short of thing?

JACK *(sullenly).* Yes, *that* sort of thing.

ALGERNON. It made me think of a lecture on Boolean algebra delivered from the back of a performing elephant. Mr. Stoppard is intelligent enough to hold our attention without resorting to such low-bred excesses.

JACK. But that is theater!

ALGERNON. Remember, it was you who said it and not I. *(He drains the glass and with a languid movement of his hand suppresses the beginnings of a modest eructation.)* I've been put in too good a mood by the wine to charge the theater with being theatrical. I will even say that I found the acting quite decent and Mr. Wood, who played Henry Carr in youth and age, and Algernon in play and playlet, is a master craftsman. He speaks with admirable rapidity, takes the full measure of a fricative, makes an English glory once more of the *louche* litotes, and in other similar ways does full justice to the demands of Stoppard's text.

JACK *(rising and pouring the remainder of the bottle).* I had hoped for more enthusiasm. It will be a long time before one sees such a clever play again.

ALGERNON. I'm sure that's so. And I promise, with only one bottle to prompt me, that I shall accompany you when that time comes. Can friendship offer more?

JACK. I've just one more question, Algy. Why do you keep calling me Ernest? Because of my profession?

ALGERNON. No, because of your impotence . . . as a reviewer, I mean.

JACK *(stiffly).* COMMENTARY has enough problems influencing American foreign policy. You can't expect it to attempt to reform American theatrical taste too. Besides, having no influence allows me to provide my readers with a respite from seriousness, an alternative to the cloying sentimentality of *Realpolitik,* and a sanctuary from academic grudges. They also serve who stand aside and prate.

ALGERNON. Perfectly right. Good night, Jack.

Jack exits. Algernon picks up a book from the floor, leafs through it, yawns, and languidly marks the place with a pizza puff as

The Review Ends.

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Watching Lina Wertmuller

William S. Pechter

LIKE many members of Lina Wertmuller's American audience, I saw *Love and Anarchy* before seeing any of her other films, though it wasn't the first film she'd made. I remember coming away from *Love and Anarchy* feeling both impressed by the obvious talent at work in it and vaguely troubled by the sensibility that the film seemed flickeringly to reveal. *Love and Anarchy* told the story of Tunin, a country bumpkin, who, in the Italy of the 30's, sets out to assassinate Mussolini. He goes to Rome, and, for the several days before the one on which he plans to strike, he's aided by a whore who shares his anti-Fascist sympathies, and who arranges (under the guise of his being her cousin) for him to hang about her fancy brothel, taking meals there and, through her, getting to meet the chief of Mussolini's security force who happens to be one of her best customers. But, while waiting for the targeted day to arrive, Tunin and another of the whores fall in love, and they decide to spend the last few days before his deed in romantic seclusion. When the day of the planned assassination arrives, his lover deliberately lets Tunin oversleep, and is supported in this act by the other whore, who also declares her love for Tunin. Tunin awakes, discovers what's happened, and flies into a rage, alternately lashing out with words and fists at the women for their interference, and cowering in terror when he mistakes a routine police inspection of the brothel's premises for a sign that the whores have betrayed him and that he's about to be captured. Crying, "Long live anarchy!" he runs amok, shooting several policemen in the process, and finally breaking out into the street, where he shouts, "I wanted to kill Mussolini for all of you . . . so we could live in freedom. . . ." He's quickly and violently subdued by police and angry citizens. In the two brief scenes which end the film, we see him first being brutally interrogated by the security chief, and then in a prison cell, as two of the security-force agents burst in on him and savagely beat him to death.

Now hard as it may be to believe from the foregoing précis, most of *Love and Anarchy* is played as farce, and quite successfully. Apart from the ending, the film's two most effective sequences are both quite straightforwardly comic ones: a long Sunday outing in the country with Tunin, the two whores, and the security chief (hilariously caricatured by Eros Pagni, something of a Mussolini look-alike); and a boisterous scene of Tunin having his first meal in the brothel. (The Fellini influence on the director's work—before making her own films, Miss Wertmuller served as Fellini's assistant—is perhaps most clearly to be seen in this latter sequence and in another, recalling Fellini's *Roma*, in which the whores display themselves for their customers to the accompaniment of a recorded rendition of "It's Delightful To Be Married," though the influence is pervasively evident in Miss Wertmuller's general fondness for the grotesque face and incident.) And while one's final impression of *Love and Anarchy* is of a work in a tragi-comic mode, the film achieves this effect not so much by a true mixture of moods, as by their drastic alternation. Things in it aren't (as they are in, say, a *Seduced and Abandoned*, or the films of Buñuel) an inseparable fusion of the funny and the horrible; they are funny, and then they turn horrible. The ending of the film, in particular, is almost unbearably powerful: a sudden, swift, unrelenting outburst of sickening violence, the impact of which is such as to call into question the rampant use of prolonged slow motion as a means of intensifying the depiction of violence in films. And this stunning conclusion tends to leave one feeling that the film was all along more serious than it often seemed, a feeling reinforced by the work's being bracketed, at one end, by a photo-montage of Mussolini and historical note on his rise to power, and, at the other, by a sober quotation from Enrico Malatesta to the effect that, though the use of murder as an instrument of political action is to be deplored, what will be remembered of the acts of assassins is not the acts themselves but rather the ideals that inspired them.

Yet the more one reflects on the film, the less satisfactory its swervings of moods and meanings seem to be. For one thing, Tunin really is portrayed throughout as too much of a comic figure to be dealt so savage a fate; it's rather as if *To Be Or Not To Be* were to end with Jack Benny being dragged off, kicking and screaming, to face a firing squad. Moreover, though the closing quotation tends to impart a retrospective dignity and highmindedness to all that's gone before, it seems singularly inappropriate to the case of Tunin, whose botched effort is made in the name of only the most generalized political sentiment ("Tyrants disgust me," he explains), and earns him only a newspaper obituary as an "unidentified" suicide. Tunin's "anarchism" seems never to have advanced beyond the moment (which we see in an opening flashback) when, as a child overhearing his father talking politics with his cronies, he asks, "Momma, what's an anarchist?" and his mother replies, "Someone who kills a prince or a king and is hanged for it." (The immediate cause of his resolve to kill Mussolini is the death at the hands of Fascist police of one of his father's friends, now an old man, who had announced his own intention to perform Mussolini's assassination; the whore's mo-

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tive is revenge for the death of her fiancé, who was killed by a Fascist mob which mistook him for an assassin.) Indeed, throughout most of the film, the joke seems to be Tunin's absolute unfitness for the task he's set himself, and the film's point that politics in general and tyrannicide in particular had best not be left to amateur bunglers; at least, this might be the point were it not for the fact that, until the film's end, the security chief (who's given to laughable extolments of Fascist virility and boasts about Mussolini having "a pair of balls big enough to screw the whole world") seems to be, if anything, a bigger clown than Tunin, with the attendant suggestion that politics generally may be the province of clowns and simpletons. Then, suddenly, we seem to be meant to see Tunin as a noble martyr to some ideological cause that will survive him. Nor is it really a case of these apparent contradictions in meaning tending to combine with and enrich each other, any more than the tragic and comic elements in the film finally jell into true tragicomedy. Rather—and it's this which I found most disturbing about the film—such things seem ultimately to have the effect of canceling each other out.

SOME time after seeing *Love and Anarchy,* I got to see *The Seduction of Mimi,* a broadly farcical account of a worker's run-in with the Mafia, the film Miss Wertmuller made immediately before. (I haven't yet got to see an even earlier film, *The Lizards,* which has had some very limited, mainly nontheatrical exhibition in this country, and which, reportedly, is heavily indebted to Fellini's *I Vitelloni.)* And soon after seeing *The Seduction of Mimi,* I saw *Everything Ready, Nothing Works,* the film Miss Wertmuller made immediately after *Love and Anarchy,* and which, I gather, is shortly to be released in America. Even allowing for the maximum harm done by some twenty minutes of distributor's cuts in *The Seduction of Mimi,* it seemed to me unlikely that this alone could account for the crude cartooning, the overemphatic Italianate (or Felliniesque) gesticulation in what remained. *Everything Ready, Nothing Works* I saw among a blur of other films at a so-called film festival, and remember now chiefly in the form of a general impression of something at once rambling and raucous, from which stand out certain frenetically virtuoso sequences set in the Arnold Wesker-like kitchen of a gigantic restaurant clearly meant to be a metaphor for the consumer society. Taken together, both of these very different films made me realize how near a thing had been the success of *Love and Anarchy,* how close that film came to tumbling over into her other films' overheated excess. And now along comes *Swept Away . . . by an unusual destiny in the blue sea of August,* Miss Wertmuller's first American smash hit, and a film no less raucous and cartoonish than anything she's done before. And yet it works—it works with a vengeance. It works, all right, but what is it?

Perhaps the best way to say what *Swept Away* is would be to see what it might have been. A man and a woman are separated from a yachting party, and, after drifting out to sea, end up together on an uninhabited island. (The film's leads are again played by Giancarlo Giannini and Marieangela Melato, the stars of both *Love and Anarchy* and *The Seduction of Mimi;* Giannini is still seen in a bit too many loving close-ups of his sad spaniel look for my tastes, but his impressive glower of hatred is also nicely on view.) The man, seizing the power that comes from his resourcefulness and the woman's helplessness in such circumstances, brutalizes her ruthlessly until she finally comes to accept their relationship as that of absolute master and abject slave.

A classic tale of sexual tyranny, one might think, of brute male force oppressing yet another female victim. But wait. On the yacht, the man was a poor worker, with the woman his employer, bitchily lording it over him. So it's a case, it would seem, of the tables turned: of a liberated slave exacting vengeance on his former mistress by teaching her how it feels to be held in slavery.

But, as it happens, the man is also a fervently dedicated Communist, and thus acts, one might think, out of some political radicalism. Yet one can't help noticing that, even before the two main characters are cast adrift, the views on women of which the man delivers himself are firmly antediluvian (he tells a fellow worker that, if his wife comported herself like the emancipated females on board, he'd "kick her ass straight to bed"). And though he ticks off his political grievances against the rich as he wallops her around the island (" . . . this is for causing inflation, and not paying taxes . . . for raising the prices of meat and cheese . . . for the sales tax, the surtax . . . for the television programs . . ."), the ultimate lesson that he has to teach is that "a woman's just an object of pleasure . . . a working man's plaything . . . meant to serve men, not the other way around," and that, if she wants to eat, she'd better learn to wash his pants ("someone's got to wash my pants") and "kiss [her] master's hand." So perhaps *Swept Away* is a slyly feminist fable after all, and we're meant to see that, inside the supposedly enlightened Communist, there is (at least in his attitudes toward women) a raving Fascist just waiting for an opportunity to get out.

And yet, if one is to understand that the man's treatment of the woman is meant to reveal the bankruptcy and hypocrisy of his political pretensions, there's still a further snag. For it turns out that the woman comes to love her bondage, and to worship the man who enslaves her ("I've got to become your god," he declares), caressing his feet and adorning his phallus with flowers in homage; she comes, in fact, to find through her enslavement to him a greater happiness and fulfillment than any she's previously known. And eventually their relationship blossoms to the point of her anxiously trying, like a newlywed, to please him with her first omelet, of their sharing tender endearments ("Christ, you're so beautiful when I beat you," etc.) and being glimpsed in lyrical poses as they stroll about their island clinging to each other. But even this prescription for male mastery as the key to sexual harmony proves precariously susceptible of

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sudden reversal. For, at the film's end, when they are rescued (she doesn't want to leave the island, but he insists that only by maintaining their new relationship in the context of society can she truly prove her love for him), she finds herself unable to cross the social barriers which reassert themselves between them and she returns to her husband, while he is seen at last, welcomed back by a fat wife, as no longer the domineering master but a poignant if comical figure, mooning and misty-eyed, filled with longing for his lost love.

WHAT is one finally to make, then, of this cross between *The Admirable Crichton* and *The Story of O*? ("Sodomize me," the woman begs at the heights—or depths—of her O-like fulfillment through submission, and declares he should have been the first to "open" and "brand" her.) One thing is certain: whatever one makes of it, there will remain ample evidence for making something else. In part, this seems to stem from a further application of the *Love and Anarchy* principle of things canceling each other out. But here the method merges with the meaning, as the characters' true selves are revealed to be just the opposite of the politics they espouse and profess to believe in: the radical worker, a tyrannical oppressor; the emancipated woman, a willing slave. And much more than in *Love and Anarchy* is there the suggestion that all political activity is a matter of foolish babble (the early scenes on the yacht present a constant din of political squabbling) and self-deceived posturing. The effect of this is markedly different from that of, say, Marco Bellocchio's *China Is Near,* in which the way its characters' political self-deceptions cloak their opportunism is subjected to a withering scrutiny, but without a demeaning of politics in general as an arena of serious and worthy endeavor. But for all that's been made of the political consciousness of Miss Wertmuller's films, the sense with which they leave one is of politics itself as something inextricable from self-deception, and as being a ridiculous and diminished enterprise. Yet even before one amazedly finds her attempting to tug one's heartstrings, however ironically, at the conclusion of *Swept Away,* one may wonder if the twists and turns of Miss Wertmuller's films haven't less to do with any convoluted dishonesties in the politics of her characters than with some opportunism in the wily use of politics on the part of the film-maker herself.

For just imagine, for a moment, that the political allegiances of *Swept Away*'s leading characters had been reversed: that the film told the story of a poor but proud, even haughty, Communist woman being beaten, sexually assaulted, and finally enslaved on an island by her capitalist employer, now released from any social restraints and free to do with her what he will. To consider, even for a moment, such a possibility (which could yield essentially the same vision of woman's fulfillment in being dominated by man) is to appreciate how cagily the political identities of *Swept Away*'s characters have been assigned and their situation set up to enable one to accept and even enjoy the fantasy of female subjugation that the film celebrates. Of course, it is clearly as a fantasy that one accepts and enjoys it, if one does—one takes this not only from the paper-thinness of the characters but from such things as the Tom-and-Jerry-like, anesthetized unreality of the violence (in sharp contrast to that of *Love and Anarchy*) whereby the man can slam the woman about endlessly without leaving a mark on her. But it's equally clear that the fantasy the film offers is being not criticized but celebrated. And though the reception of the film (". . . suddenly, she submits to her love for him and becomes in the process truly liberated," rhapsodizes the New York *Times*) may be some indication of how deep-seated and widespread its rape-and-conquest fantasy is, it seems to me no less offensive for being so—and ultimately no less offensive either for being cast with a Communist worker enslaving a capitalist boss rather than the reverse.

And yet who am I to find it offensive when even *Ms.* magazine finds it all so sublime? For, in the last analysis, I think the remarkable willingness to let *Swept Away* go down without outcry, results not only from its clever manipulation of political commitments but from something else even more. Again, imagine for a moment that *Swept Away* had been directed by a man, even someone short of Sam Peckinpah: I think there would have been women rioting in the audience. Some of the reviewers of Miss Wertmuller's earlier work did, in fact, pay her the tactless compliment of saying she made films like a man, meaning, I suppose, that her work had a certain boldness and violent energy, which is not usually associated with the female sensibility in the arts. To be sure, her films are strong in a way that has generally been thought of as masculine. And with all their souped-up liveliness, they are also undeniably entertaining, though there comes to seem to me something more than faintly repellent about her films' relentless liveliness when a noxious element like the core fantasy of *Swept Away* is being made undeniably entertaining—or when we're made to laugh at such things as the much-lauded comic high point of *The Seduction of Mimi,* in which Miss Wertmuller switches to a fish-eye lens to emphasize the whale-like physical grossness of a fat woman as she clambers amorously over the film's protagonist. Of course, one might argue that women ought to be liberated to the point of being able, if they wish, to make films as crude and coarse-grained—and as "sexist"—as any man. Seen in this light, it may indeed be that Miss Wertmuller's ascendant popularity and reputation represent a victory of sorts in the battle for equality of the sexes. If so, I think it's another of those "victories" characteristic of our times, in which no one is the winner.

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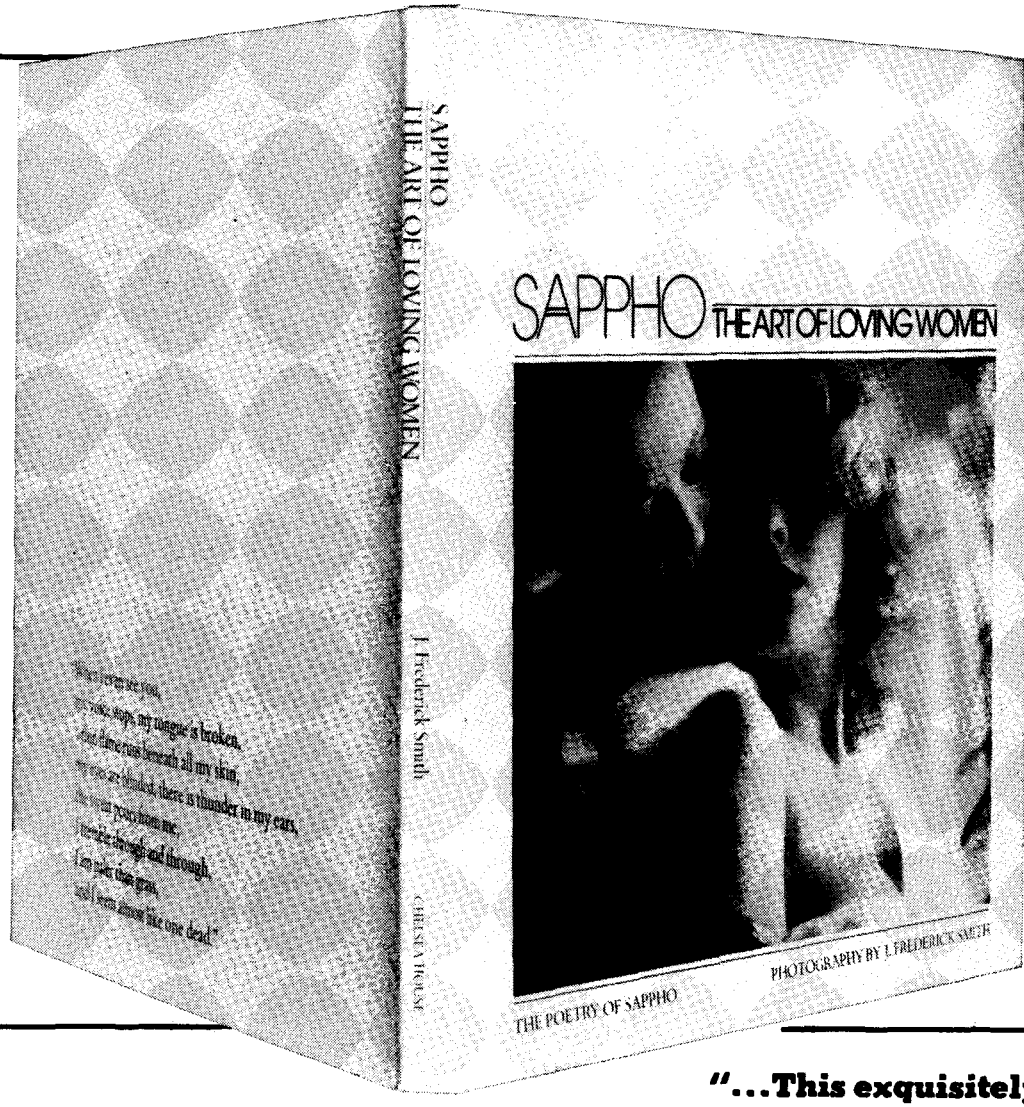

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Journalism vs. History

A FORD, NOT A LINCOLN. By RICHARD REEVES. *Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. 212 pp. $8.95.*

Reviewed by EDWARD JAY EPSTEIN

IN WRITING about the Presidency, journalists tend with increasing frequency to confuse their physical proximity to the seat of power with a proximity to truth. While White House reporters may spend most of their time in a press room only a few hundred feet from the Oval office, they do not necessarily have access to the deliberations and decisions of the inner sanctum. On the contrary. From the point of view of the President, the function of the White House press corps is to report to the nation carefully organized information designed to advance his policies. Whether in the form of official pronouncements, interviews, and televised press conferences, or in the form of well-prepared leaks to selected reporters, the daily diet of White House information is meant for a purpose to which the messengers need not be privy.

Ambitious journalists have an alternative to accepting the official (or off-the-record) news package: they can seek out leaks (or "plants") from those wishing to resist or undermine the policies of the Chief Executive. Yet while doing so is likely to win them the plaudits of their peers, their role is still that of a messenger—for one interest group or another.

Journalists insist that to maintain "access"—either to the White House or to the counter-leakers in legislative committees, bureaus, or wherever—they must at least partly obscure their sources. Hence, assertions about the Presidency often are not clearly connected to the interest group or person from which they emanate. Though it may very well be a necessary one, this practice of separating assertions from asserters in itself distinguishes journalism from such other forms of knowledge as history and legal fact-finding. Historians and lawyers base their conclusions on the logic of substantiation, which requires that every statement be connected by a chain of evidence to its ultimate source, clearly identified and evaluated. Journalists who conceal the identity and nature of their sources base their conclusions on what may be called the logic of anecdotes. The assertion itself, dissociated from the precise circumstances in which it was made, can be evaluated only in terms of its plausibility, originality, or interest to a given audience—criteria which do not exclude the purveying of false information.

Journalists do not like to admit that they employ a different mode of inquiry, and different standards of evidence, from those of historians, and instead attribute the shortcomings of their reporting to the limits imposed by the requirements of their editors and publications. To be sure, such limitations exist and have their effect. But even if they had unlimited time and space, journalists who persisted in concealing their sources would still be relying on anecdotal logic and their reporting would rightly remain suspect to historians and lawyers.

RICHARD REEVES's book on the Ford Presidency, *A Ford, Not a Lincoln,* illustrates this inherent problem of journalism. Reeves is a respected journalist and former "chief political correspondent" of the New York *Times,* and he served for a short time as White House correspondent for *New York* magazine. In writing this book he was not constrained by time or space deadlines, or by rigorous editors. Yet, despite his reportorial skills and his fluent style of writing, the book is in reality no more than a collection of surreptitiously-authored assertions about Gerald Ford made by a host of unspecified "sources." Reeves claims he had some 150 such sources—as if the number of anonymous purveyors of charges added weight or credibility to the whole fabric—but since there are no footnotes or attempts at attribution, there is no way of knowing which charges were made by political enemies, by disappointed aspirants for favors, by disgruntled bureaucrats, or by journalists in the presidential entourage feeding one another rumors they dared not print themselves.

Reeves, who at times interviews himself as well as his colleagues, appears to be one of the most voracious detractors of the President. His various anonymous charges, self-interviews, and unattributed anecdotes are loosely knit into a thesis: that Gerald Ford is a totally inadequate leader and a totally inadequate President, lacking both policies and priorities. For his "study" Reeves makes the functional assumption that the time he covered Ford was a representative segment of the President's stewardship, even though it was only his first two months in office. Since he was apparently not in on the planning of policies or appointments during that period, Reeves bases his conclusion that the President *had* no new policies on Ford's formal and informal meetings with the press, and on the fact that the President stressed continuity rather than change in his public rhetoric.

Yet none of this proves that Ford was an ineffectual leader in that period. It was, after all, a time of transition, and every other Vice President who has succeeded to the Presidency in this century—Theodore Roosevelt, Calvin Coolidge, Harry Truman, and Lyndon Baines Johnson—has similarly and for good cause stressed the theme of continuity in his initial months in office. Ford's transitional performance in this respect is no different from Johnson's or Truman's,

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EDWARD JAY EPSTEIN *is Research Director of the Twentieth Century Fund's Project on News Agencies. Mr. Epstein's most recent book is* Between Fact and Fiction: The Problem of Journalism *(Vintage).*

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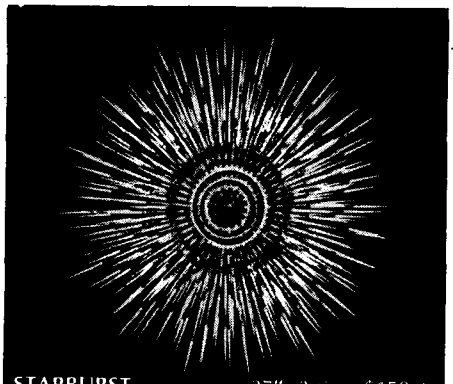

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and may be better explained in terms of the nature of the Presidency as an instrument for succession in times of crisis than in terms of Ford's personal qualities. (Ford also faced the problem—which Reeves neglects to mention—that his party was in the minority in both houses of Congress.)

The only bit of documentation Reeves offers to buttress his charge of Ford's lack of initiative is a memorandum prepared for the President by his staff concerning the organization of the Office of Economic Opportunity, a memorandum which Ford approved in line with his staff's recommendations. While this episode is in itself meaningless (why shouldn't an executive accept his staff's recommendation?), Reeves is able to extrapolate from it the far-reaching conclusion that Ford was (and is) a rubber-stamp President. But how can Reeves assert that this is what Ford did in *every* case? To make this claim credible, he would have to show familiarity not just with one decision but with all the decisions Ford made, and in the unlikely event he could do so, he would then have to demonstrate that each one represented a case of the President's agreeing with his staff, rather than the other way around. Obviously, Reeves did not have access to presidential decisions, and he simply assumed that the single example he did have was representative of every presidential action.

The main evidence that Reeves marshals to support his case is not, however, documents, but anecdotes from Ford's opponents which depict the President as unintelligent. For example, when Ford was minority leader of the Congress he opposed Lyndon Johnson's Model Cities program. Reeves quotes Johnson as telling an assistant, "You've got a little baby boy . . . you take his little building blocks and go up and explain to Jerry Ford what we're trying to do." Now, as it happens, the Model Cities program proved to be an unmitigated disaster, and Ford's reasons for opposing it (which Reeves does not discuss) proved to be correct insights into the realities of urban politics; the anecdote proves only that Johnson was a master at spreading clever abuse of political opponents (and at knowing the sort of story the press would snap up). Reeves, without even the benefit of a personal interview with President Ford, asserts on his own authority that Ford is "slow . . . also unimaginative and not very articulate." He notes that Ford took six years to work his way through Yale Law School. Actually, Ford finished in the top third of his class at Yale, an intellectual distinction which few journalists can match. (Reeves himself studied mechanical engineering at Stevens Institute in New Jersey.)

Finally, assuming the role of an omniscient observer of Ford's inner thoughts, Reeves attacks the credibility of his public statements. To take one extraordinary example, Reeves tells how Ford, when still Vice President, was asked by a television reporter, "How does it feel to be . . . a heartbeat away [from the Presidency]?"—the equivalent of asking someone how he feels about the prospect of inheriting a great deal of money from a still-living relative. Ford responded innocuously, "I don't think about it." Reeves concludes, in a logic-defying somersault: "The Vice President was either a liar or a fool. The truth was that Ford was obsessed and confused." On the basis of a single conversation Reeves thus claims to know Ford's deepest and most personal thoughts as well as his inner psychological state.

Such journalistic leaps are necessary to connect otherwise disconnected anecdotes and snippets of conversation. The problem with Reeves's attempt to depict the Presidency is the problem of journalism in general. Reporters are perfectly capable of acquiring interesting information—leaks, handouts, rumors, palace gossip, and the like—but anecdotal logic does not make for historical explanation. When they do not have deadlines to meet, journalists tend merely to compound this problem a hundredfold, as Reeves does here. Readers may be intrigued, titillated, and amused by this style of writing, but they should know that it has no value as history.

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The Artist as Rebel

WRITERS AND REVOLUTION: THE FATAL LURE OF ACTION. By RENEE WINEGARTEN. *New Viewpoints/Franklin Watts. 377 pp. $12.50.*

Reviewed by JOHN WAIN

The thesis of this book is stated concisely on p. 321: "The modern era since the French revolution has witnessed a strange confusion between the world of literature and that of political revolution, a confusion from which ultimately the latter has gained what the former has lost." Every epoch constructs for itself a calendar in which there was a Year One, and the 19th-century Romantics (whether political or artistic) sited their Year One at 1789, as we site our infinitely darker beginnings at the blood-red eclipse of 1914. The first "revolution" in the modern sense was 1789. Before that there had been risings of the downtrodden, there had been struggles between rival power groups, but nothing powered by the quasi-mystical concept of Revolution, the turning of a wheel stuck fast in mud. So Mrs. Winegarten's survey necessarily begins there. Before that point, plenty of people, and writers, had been radical: Milton chose to write about Eden and the losing of Paradise because he identified with a party that wanted to struggle free of the past and begin the world again from a position of amnesiac innocence. But none had been revolutionary, because the concept did not exist.

After 1789, it existed with a vengeance, becoming for many an absolute that took over from the (to them) discredited absolute of an anthropomorphic religion. (It does not seem to be discredited for Mrs. Winegarten, if I interpret correctly pages 312-13). Like all absolutes, it repels some people and irresistibly attracts others; or attracts and repels individuals at different stages

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JOHN WAIN, *the English novelist, poet, and critic, is Professor of Poetry at Oxford. His most recent works are* Feng, *a book-length poem, and a biography of Samuel Johnson.*

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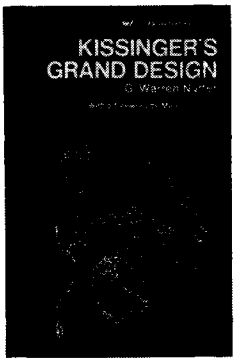

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of their lives; or engulfs them, never to be released. What Mrs. Winegarten offers is a diagnosis, accompanied by case histories. A long string of major writers passes before us, all of them at some stage paying homage to the revolutionary god. Blake, Wordsworth, Heine, Lamartine, Baudelaire, Turgenev, Dostoevsky, D. H. Lawrence, Malraux, Orwell, are just some of the examples she works out for us. Between the poles of Blake and Victor Serge they are all strung out—Blake, who after an intense phase of revolutionism that sprang more from his apocalyptic millenarianism than from infatuation with any political system, declared in later years: "I am really sorry to see my countrymen trouble themselves about politics. If men were wise, the most arbitrary princes could not hurt them. If they are not wise, the freest government is compelled to be a tyranny"; and Serge, who ate, drank, and breathed revolution, who renounced the individual life, who freely admitted that his generation, born to be the worker-ants of history, were "interchangeable," who went to Russia, was savagely maltreated in one of Stalin's concentration camps, was rescued by pressure from Western ("bourgeois") literary opinion, and died in Mexico still singing hymns of "confidence in mankind and the future," as expressed in the revolutionary ideal.

Clearly in the case of a man like Serge we are dealing with spiritual illness. A political system cannot, by itself, bring heaven down to earth, and to give one's life to the illusion that it can is merely to admit a failure to face the real complexities of life. A revolutionary is a bull in a china shop, determined to smash all the finest pieces on his way to attack the shoddy goods that are admittedly on prominent display. Only it is not china he is smashing, but people. Mrs. Winegarten remarks the significant similarity between the secular and the religious fanatic, pointing out that men are as ready to murder and torture each other in the name of the ideal human society as they once were in the name of God.

Within this framework, Mrs. Winegarten has many perceptive things to say about the underlying reasons. Why have so many writers fallen for the lure of revolutionary action, some of them to commit violence, all of them to make excuses for it or openly extol it? The individual relationship to violence, of course, varies like everything else; all the way from Orwell, who was prepared to take up arms ("You can only love your enemies if you are prepared to kill them under certain circumstances") but despised the condoning of murder by "the kind of person who is always somewhere else when the trigger is pulled," to Sartre, who seems never to have developed beyond the nasty-clever little boy who invents philosophical reasons for pulling the wings off flies.

After nineteen chapters, Mrs. Winegarten has a somber and incisive epilogue in which she does not fail to note the central paradox that the revolutionary ethic is the child of Western civilization, that is, of a civilization overwhelmingly bourgeois, whose highest achievements have nearly all come from the bourgeoisie and whose laboring masses ask nothing but to become bourgeois in their turn. After closing the book, one is left with a number of speculations. How much, for instance, does the anti-bourgeois ranting of these children of the bourgeoisie, generation after generation of them, represent an emotionally necessary shadow-play, a ritual tribute to Gog after which they can settle down comfortably in the shadow of Magog? To let off steam is a primal human necessity; men who live blameless sexual lives meet every evening to tell each other dirty jokes, and sleek porpoises gambolling in the tank of the *société de consommation* gather to talk about bombs on the Left Bank. Only the isolated neurotics, the Ulrika Meinhoffs and the Bridget Rose Dugdales, carry these fantasies into fact. (Third World insurgents are another matter; they are interested not in fancy theories of revolution but in forcing the "developed" nations to move over and give them a chance at the trough.)

It will have emerged by now that I think Mrs. Winegarten's book very good. The case histories are so deftly done, the quotations are selected with such a judging eye, and the lucid, civilized writing is a pleasure to read. Particularly since, all the time one is reading, one is mentally constructing another book, the mirror-image of this one, which would marshal an equal number of writers who have *not* felt the fatal lure of the revolutionary ethos. Mrs. Winegarten, for obvious reasons, picks out those writers who did feel it. The nearest she gets to an exception is Turgenev, whose interest in revolution developed into a flirtation but never to an affair, let alone a marriage. In one of the ablest essays in the book, she analyzes his dilemma; Turgenev "was in the vulnerable position of those who remain true to their own inner divisions, however disconcerting these may be, and who succeed in pleasing scarcely anybody, perhaps least of all themselves."

Turgenev is, so to speak, Mrs. Winegarten's low-water mark; of all the writers she deals with, he was least involved in revolutionary theory, most able to see through its damaging simplicities. But of course if we journey on from Turgenev we find a whole world of writers who had no truck with it. All the way from a comic-paper reactionary like Evelyn Waugh to a complex conservative like T. S. Eliot, whom she mentions only glancingly, to Chekhov, to Tolstoy, for God's sake!, to Whitman (a case she might have analyzed interestingly), to Balzac, to Yeats. . . . The only danger lurking in this excellent book is that it might give to the hasty reader the idea that literary people are somehow more apt to swallow the revolutionary bait than just people, period. In fact, some are and some aren't, like anyone else. What bait did Osip Mandelstam swallow, or Thomas Mann, or Arnold Bennett, or William Faulkner? Behind Mrs. Winegarten's book is the diagram of its anti-self, a book on how successfully some writers have seen through this kind of claptrap; but of course so urbane, so erudite, and so balanced a critic knows that already.

Since Mrs. Winegarten is pretty

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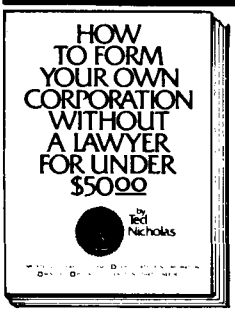

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firmly convinced that the revolutionary ethos is hostile to the life of the imagination, her book tends on the whole to show how writers have been damaged, or managed to avoid being damaged, by their involvement with revolution (though occasionally, as in the case of Byron, she acknowledges it as an important fuel). Have there been no writers anywhere, one wonders after closing the book, whose work has been energized and lifted up by revolutionary sentiment? Mrs. Winegarten would probably reply that such lifting-up was at best only temporary, and followed by a heavy drop.

Perhaps the most lasting impression left by *Writers and Revolution* is the sheer diversity of the imaginative talents that have, at some stage in their lives, been drawn to this magnet. Among the many examples necessarily crowded out of a selective book on a large theme, my favorite would be Tennyson. When the Spaniards rebelled against Ferdinand VII and the Inquisition, a fund was taken up by sympathizers in England, and two young Cambridge men journeyed to a mountain hideout in the Pyrenees to hand the money over to the rebel leaders. The two young men were Tennyson and Arthur Hallam. The future author of *Idylls of the King* and *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington,* accompanied by the man whose death was to inspire *In Memoriam,* engaged in the financial equivalent of gun-running! Revolutionary sentiments, like all sentiments, make strange bedfellows ; Mrs. Winegarten's book is a mind-sharpening commentary on it all.

Roots of Radicalism

THE FASCIST PERSUASION IN RADICAL POLITICS. By A. JAMES GREGOR. *Princeton. 472 pp. $15.00.*

Reviewed by CARL GERSHMAN

IT IS now some years since the radicalism of the 1960's, often called the New Left, ran out of steam. The idols of the era, whose popularity rested so heavily on their reputation for revolutionary purity, are now badly compromised. Chairman Mao welcomed Nixon to China, Fidel Castro had the temerity to jail a poet and now favors improved relations with the U.S., Rennie Davis sits at the feet of a teenage Maharaji, Tom Hayden is running for the United States Senate, and Eldridge Cleaver has become, of all things, an anti-Communist. For many radicals, yet another god has failed.

Still, the precise nature of the god that proved unworthy remains unclear. The New Left was always more interested in changing the world than interpreting it, and it was even less willing to make a serious effort to understand itself. Yet now that the revolutionary flames have somewhat subsided, it should be possible to look at New Left radicalism in historical prespective. *The Fascist Persuasion in Radical Politics* will help this effort considerably. If the title of the book and its main theses—that contemporary radicalism bears a striking resemblance to classical fascism—appear overly polemical, the fault is not Gregor's, since he has written an exceedingly judicious essay in political theory. Rather, the confusion derives from a connotation of the term "fascist" which, according to Gregor, "in our time serves as little more than an epithet. It has become a simple term of derogation —having little if any cognitive meaning." Gregor retrieves this meaning in his effort to place contemporary radicalism within a coherent theoretical framework.

Gregor locates the origin of both Fascism and Bolshevism, two parallel movements, in the crisis of classical Marxism which occurred at the beginning of this century. In a word, the crisis came about with the recognition among followers of Marx that social democracy and revolution were not one and the same thing. Marx had written that a socialist revolution could occur only when historical conditions had sufficiently ripened, or (in Gregor's words) "only in circumstances where the productive forces of society had attained that level of development capable of supporting a classless society." A socialist revolution could not be willed by revolutionaries any more than the required historical conditions could be. Rather, it was assumed that historical conditions, as they matured, would produce among the working class the will, or class consciousness, needed to carry through a socialist revolution. It was also assumed that such a revolution would occur in the most advanced capitalist countries of Europe and North America where the working classes were large, powerful, and politically mature.

THE crisis of classical Marxism, according to Gregor, became apparent in the early 1900's when socialist revolutionaries came face to face with the reality of a nonrevolutionary proletariat. Their dilemma was difficult: they could either stick with the working class, in which case they would have to settle for social-democratic gradualism as opposed to revolution, or they could press the revolutionary struggle, in which case they would have to abandon the working class and Marxian socialism in favor of something as yet undefined. Eduard Bernstein chose the first course, and subsequently so did Karl Kautsky. But others, notably Lenin and Mussolini, chose the second, and in so doing they became the forerunners of contemporary radicalism.

In their search for a viable revolutionary strategy, Lenin and Mussolini discarded both the determinist and Eurocentric aspects of Marxism. It is well known that by 1902 Lenin had reached the conclusion that, since the working class by itself could achieve only "trade-union consciousness," a vanguard party composed of intellectual revolutionaries was required to execute the revolution. It is less well known that at virtually the same time Mussolini made a similar jump from class-bound Marxian determinism to elitist revolutionary voluntarism. A socialist revolution, he wrote in 1904, would be "initiated by a minority." Like Lenin, he referred to this minority as a "proletarian elite" and a "socialist vanguard," concepts which Marx had rejected a half century earlier.

Once Lenin and Mussolini had accepted the necessity of a van-

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guard party, they were faced with the problem of mobilizing masses for the revolution. Both discovered that the natural social base for revolutionary politics lay among those excluded from the process of production—declassed intellectuals, the lumpenproletariat, the atomized petit-bourgeoisie, and the dispossessed masses of the backward East. Class struggle was obviously out of the question, in that it presupposed a conflict between the owners and producers of wealth taking place within the capitalist system of production. Both Mussolini and Lenin proposed to attack the system from *without*; each in his own way adopted revolutionary nationalism—the nationalism of the oppressed, as it were—as the basic organizing principle of social struggle. And in both cases, too, the rhetoric of socialism was not abandoned but was used rather to convey the radical anti-capitalist character of revolutionary nationalism. Dino Grandi, a leading Italian Fascist, observed that the future would be dominated by "a class struggle between nations" which pitted the backward "proletarian nations" against the advanced "capitalist nations." Lenin, shortly before his death in 1924, wrote that the outcome of the world struggle would be determined by the "conflict between the counter-revolutionary imperialist West and the revolutionary nationalist East."

THE major part of Gregor's study is devoted to demonstrating the similarity between these archetypal versions of "national socialism" and subsequent variants of the phenomenon, particularly Maoism, Castroism, and two non-regime radicalisms, the student Left and American black separatism. The basic shared characteristic of all these movements is a belief in extreme revolutionary voluntarism and a commitment to "national liberation," by which is meant the struggle of "the wretched of the earth" against the industrialized countries. Nationalism, as George Lichtheim once pointed out in these pages,* is made a substitute

* "Imperialism in this Century," May 1970.

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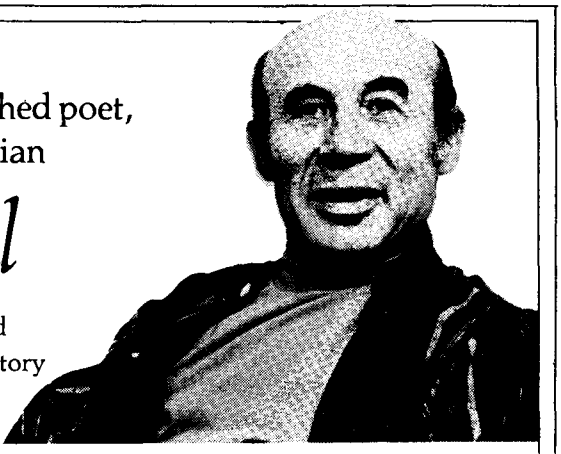

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for socialism, and the revolutionary role of the proletariat is assigned to the peasantry of the East and the lumpenproletariat of the West. The vanguard leadership, of course, is drawn from the declassed intelligentsia. This ideology received its most explicit formulation in Regis Debray's *Revolution in the Revolution?*

The voluntarism of neo-fascist radicalism manifests itself both in the process of making the revolution and in the effort to transform society once power has been seized. "It is not necessary to wait until all conditions for revolution exist," wrote Che Guevara; "the insurrection can create them." Once in power, the revolutionary leadership, acting through the transmission belt of the party, attempts to impose a social transformation from above. The society is organized on a military basis, terror is used systematically, party purges are carried out periodically to insure absolute discipline, and various "war psychology" techniques are used—the invocation of national myths, warnings of imminent danger from a menacing imperialism, moral appeals to create a "new man"—to mobilize the masses behind the program calling for extreme sacrifice and deprivation. In sum, economics, society, and history itself are subordinated to the political will of the vanguard party and its supreme leader.

ALL of this has great appeal to disaffected Western intellectuals, not merely because neo-fascist developmental totalitarianism is anti-Western, but primarily because it is *revolutionary*. It offers the possibility of creating a new world, or at least a new Third World, which is a far more attractive proposition than the tedious routine of liberal democracy. Gregor quotes an interesting statement by Mao Tse-tung which explains the appeal of revolutionary China (and similar revolutionary dictatorships) to Western radicals:

> Apart from their other characteristics, China's 60 million people have two remarkable peculiarities: they are, first of all, poor, and secondly blank. That may seem like a bad thing. But it is really a good thing. Poor people want change, want to do things, want revolution. A clean sheet of paper has no blotches, and so the newest and most beautiful words can be written on it . . . .

But of course the notion that a country thousands of years old can be a *tabula rasa* is utterly fantastical. Totalitarian regimes in backward lands have not produced socialism, only a new tyranny rooted in an ancient Oriental despotism. Marx was entirely correct in observing that a *socialist* revolution of redistribution can take place only after a *capitalist* revolution of production has created redistributable wealth. The dilemma of contemporary radicals is that the only economic system in modern times that has demonstrated the capacity to revolutionize the means of production is also the system that they oppose unalterably in every respect: namely, capitalism. To the degree they seek to pit the so-called "proletarian" nations against the "capitalist" nations, which is the central proposition of neo-fascist radicalism, they are insuring the failure of the revolution.

THE decline of New Left radicalism in the 1970's can certainly be attributed in part to the realization by some leaders of the "proletarian" nations that they have more to gain than to lose from a positive relationship with the most advanced economies of the world. This does not mean that neo-fascist radicalism has disappeared, or that it will disappear. But as its international base of support has shrunk, its remaining cadres have turned to the most extreme form of voluntarism—revolutionary terror. Unlike its ideological forebears, Lenin and Mussolini, Germany's Baader-Meinhoff gang doesn't even have a "new proletariat" in whose name to make the revolution. But the increasingly coordinated international terror ring of which it is a part does have advanced weapons and an unshakable commitment to die for the revolution. With this attribute, neo-fascist radicalism, even in its decline, has the ability to bring democratic civilization to its knees.

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Shadowboxing

ARABS AND ISRAELIS: A DIALOGUE. By SAUL FRIEDLANDER and MAHMOUD HUSSEIN. Moderated by JEAN LACOUTURE. *Holmes & Meier. 221 pp. $12.95.*

Reviewed by ROSE G. LEWIS

IT WAS in 1939, I think, that the Arabs for the first time officially refused to talk with the Jewish Palestinians. Their intransigence began, at any rate, years before there were Arab refugees, or occupied territories, or even an independent Israel. What did exist at that time was the claim of Jewish entitlement to basic rights in Palestine and a Jewish demand for self-determination, equality, and freedom from Arab rule. These were ideas so unexpected and so shocking to the Arab mind that, apparently, no compromise with them could be imagined and no discussion was thought possible.

Since then, the Arab policy of non-communication has become fixed in the public awareness and any conversation between an Arab and an Israeli can be viewed as something of a happening in and of itself. So it is that, concerning this recent conversation (which has already been published in France and in Israel and is now translated into English), primary significance is seen in the fact that a "genuine dialogue" took place at all. "For the first time *they* have agreed to meet, to speak together," exclaims France's *Le Figaro* about the book. "In the course of its pages myths crumble, preconceptions fall apart." Strictly speaking, neither of these statements happens to be true. Nonetheless, *Le Figaro*'s sentiment does reflect the air of the book. That a few men sat and talked together for three days is presented as such an earthshaking event that, at the very least, something somewhere must surely have crumbled and fallen apart.

ROSE G. LEWIS, *who contributed "Israel's Rights and Arab Propaganda" to our August 1975 issue, is a free-lance writer whose articles have appeared in the Jerusalem* Post, Jewish Frontier, *and other periodicals.*

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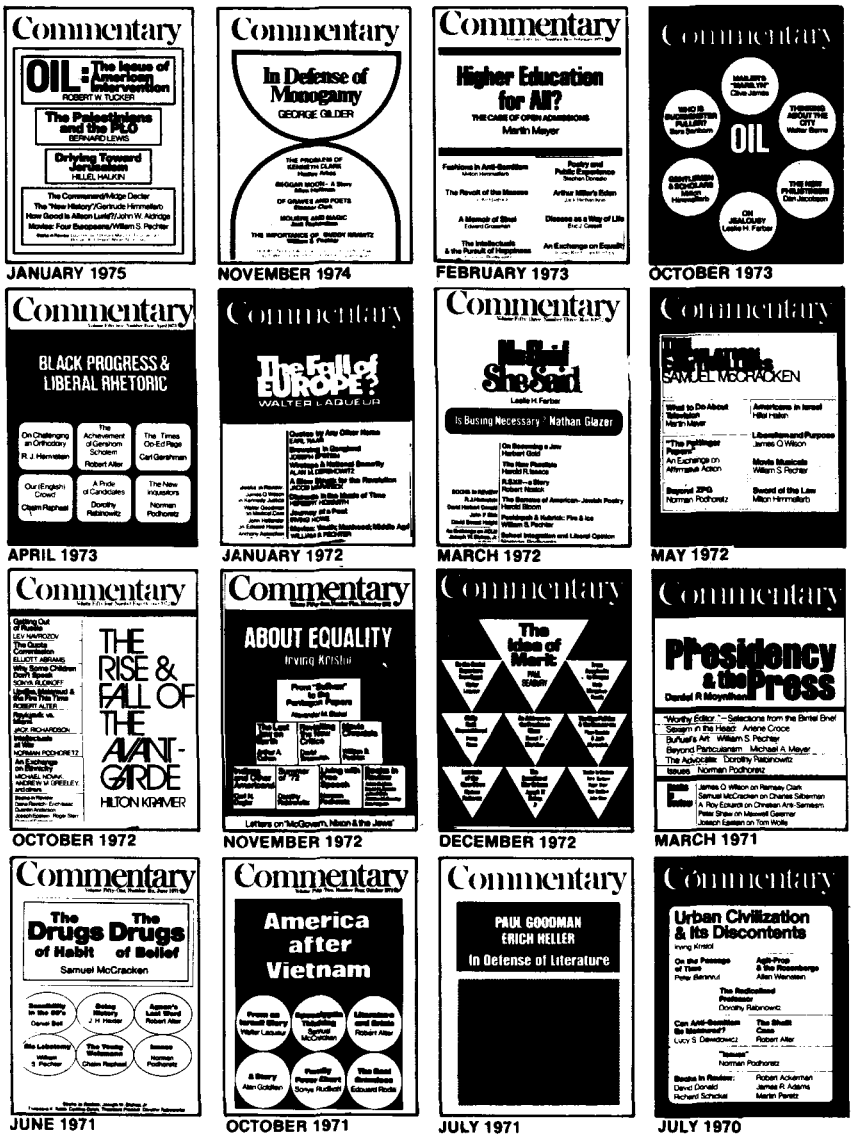

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The characters in this drama are not easily identifiable as spokesmen for their governments or for specific political groups. They are only, in a general sort of way, held to be representative of certain sensibilities and points of view. The Israeli, Saul Friedlander, is described as a "liberal in the Anglo-Saxon tradition" and representative of the "liberal current of thought of Israel's politico-intellectual class." He is "in favor of more active attempts to achieve a form of peace that combines justice with security." Friedlander, then, is what is now known as a dove. He was born in Prague in 1932 and is a professor of history at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and the Graduate Institute of International Relations in Geneva.

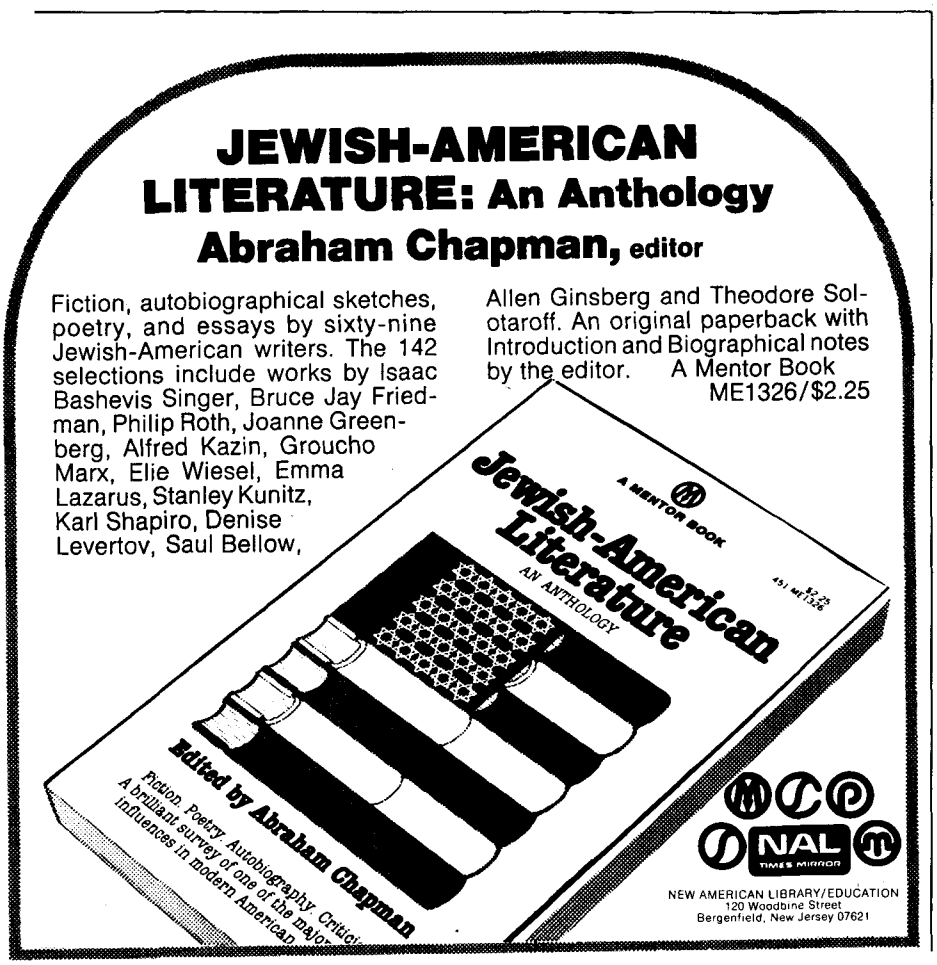
Mahmoud Hussein is harder to bring into focus. The name, it turns out, is a pseudonym for not one but *two* Arabs whom, however, we hear speaking in only a single undifferentiated voice throughout the book. Their real names are Bahgat Elnadi and Adel Rifaat. They are Egyptians, recently turned thirty, and Communists since adolescence, who have "divided their lives among militant activism, prison (in Egypt), and exile." They are settled in Paris. Rifaat, while claiming to be a dedicated Marxist, is a Jewish convert to Islam, though the book does not mention it. Mahmoud Hussein's voice, we are told, is the voice of the Arab avant-garde and "an echo of the popular voice . . . typical of the style of reasoning" heard in Cairo and Damascus.

The man who brought the three together around the tape recorder, and who serves as moderator, is Jean Lacouture, who has been a Cairo correspondent for *France-Soir* and a foreign correspondent for *Le Monde*. He had long wished to set up a meeting of this sort, Lacouture writes, and he hoped "more than anything else to show that a lively exchange of views is more fertile than a fight to the death."

Despite this hope, Lacouture expected that he would be called upon often to "cool off the atmosphere or even to stop fights." That such intervention turned out to be unnecessary pleased him very much. The argument, indeed, does not appear to have been very heated, let alone bloody. And it ended, also, not with a bang. There was a last, lengthy statement from Hussein. Then Friedlander, asked for his concluding remarks, responded simply that he had nothing more to add. At this point Lacouture brings the curtain down with a flourish. "How can I convey the significance of that silence?" he asks. It "proved to us all that our meeting had not been in vain." But Friedlander, in an afterword, goes on to interpret his own silence. What he had really meant, he says, was that there seemed no further point in repeating arguments which had already been gone over several times and he was in fact expressing disappointment at the failure to establish a genuine dialogue or to achieve real understanding.

It would appear, then, that the "fertility" of the meeting was finally questionable, and it is difficult in the reading to uncover any promising seeds of fruitfulness. There is in fact little movement, first to last, and the speakers exit pretty much as they entered. They leave behind no hint of a mutually acceptable accommodation, nor have they added much to the prevailing public knowledge. What the book does do, however, is to present a view of the ideological battlefield and of the arguments lined up on either side by these particular types of protagonists. From this standpoint, the debate is worth examination.

WE FIND, at the outset, that the discussion proceeds from some significant assumptions which appear to be held on both sides. One of these assumptions is that there was no important conflict between Arabs and Jews—indeed, no pertinent Arab-Jewish history at all—before modern Zionism. The opening remarks on "The Past," therefore, go back to a point roughly around 1945. That young Maoists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can date the world from the day they were born is not surprising. What is odd is that a history professor should let them get away with it. In any event, ignoring the last two thousand years of the history of the Jewish people in the Middle East and in Palestine gives Hussein the freedom to launch the customary assault upon Israel as a foreign body in an Arab world and a country without "authenticity." To all this, Friedlander responds only with some gentle probing. Were Arab perceptions, perhaps, not quite as Hussein described them? Might something more be said about Egyptian attitudes? Just a few small corrections of fact.

Friedlander makes no attempt to stand up to these first hard-hitting charges against Israel, though they are of course the heart of the matter. Certainly he does nothing so shrill as to suggest that the "original sin" may have been the thirteen centuries of Arab oppression of the Jewish people within as well as outside its homeland. Insofar as silence denotes acquiescence, Friedlander concedes the intruder status in the Middle East into which Hussein has cast Israel and the Israelis. It is a vital point, and round one obviously goes to the Arabs.

A second underlying assumption of the debate is that the only significant imperialism in the Middle East has been European. One of Hussein's major contentions, from which several others flow, is that Arab problems stem uniquely from European imperialism and that the Arabs' primary need therefore is to cast out all Western influence. This tells only a small part of the story, of course. For all but one century or so of the past twelve or thirteen centuries, the prevailing empires in the Middle East have been Arab, Egyptian, and Turkish. Under these Muslim imperialisms, the Jews also were a subject people, they also were exploited, and in addition they suffered from the extra burdens and humiliations of official religious discrimination and local fanaticism.

Nor were the Jews in the Muslim countries, and the Jews similarly afflicted in Christian countries, able except in meager numbers to take refuge in their own homeland. Muslim imperialist policies had consigned Palestine to a backwater of empire, badly protected, left to raiding nomads and avaricious administrators and economic and physical decay. For their own imperialist reasons, for example, the Mamluk rulers of the 14th-century Egyptian empire deliberately destroyed the harbors and the fertile coastal plains of Palestine and made that area the desert that it remained until the 20th century.

On the subject of imperialism, incidentally, Lacouture adds an interesting comment. "Personally," he says at one point, "my argument for the legitimacy of the State of Israel is largely based on this resistance to a colonial force. It is this struggle for liberation, rather than the struggle of Judah Macca-

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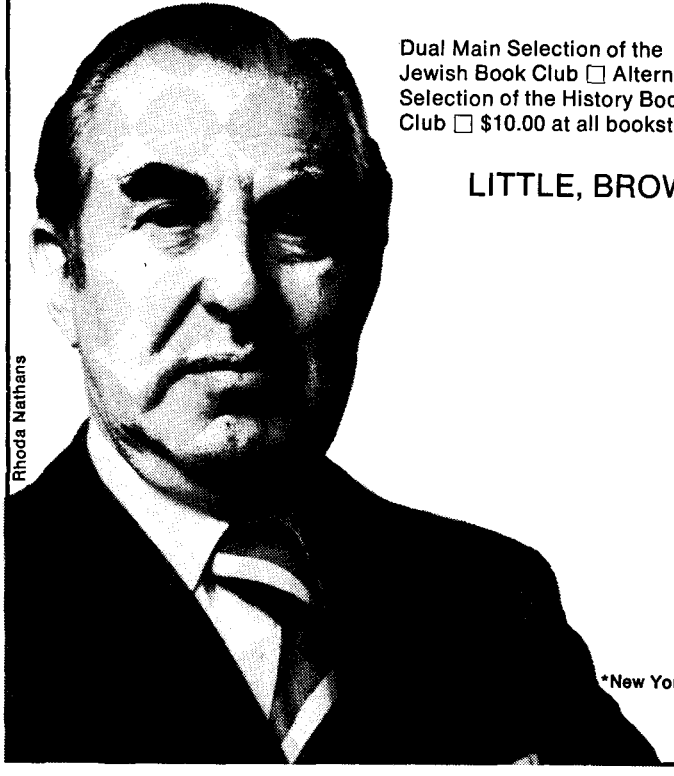

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bee, that justifies Israel's existence in my mind." Lacouture's words hang somewhat in midair, and it seems that he is referring to the struggle against the English. What is significant, however, is that for him, as for so many others today, a national-liberation movement requires an oppressive imperialism nearby to give it legitimacy. The many centuries of Arab, Egyptian, and Ottoman imperialism and the accompanying oppression of the Jewish people in and out of Palestine would therefore seem to have some usefulness as an argument in support of Israel's claims. Friedlander gives no attention to this history, nor does he challenge the most sweeping Arab implications about European imperialism and its impact upon the various peoples in the Middle East. It is another major strategic advance for Hussein, and one from which he is able to mount attack after attack upon Israel as merely the servant and symbol of the West in the oppression of the Arab.

Finally, both Friedlander and Hussein ignore altogether the many hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees who since 1940 have fled from Arab countries. These indigenous Middle Eastern peoples, who can with full semantic propriety be called Jewish Arabs, today make up a majority of the Jewish Israelis. To all our speakers, they are invisible.

It is therefore possible for Friedlander to assert that "for the Israeli man in the street the Arabs . . . were somewhat mythical figures before the 1967 war." It is therefore possible for Lacouture to say that in the last few years the Arabs have "accepted the permanent presence of the Jewish people in the Middle East. In some sense, this was a step forward. . . ." It is therefore possible for Hussein to talk about a "fresh and progressive attitude" among Arabs which gives the Jews "a place in Palestine as a distinct community for the first time." And later Hussein is able to advance as "new" and "innovative" the idea of a Palestine made up of "a Jewish community, a Muslim community, and even a distinct Christian community."

Hussein is in fact describing the

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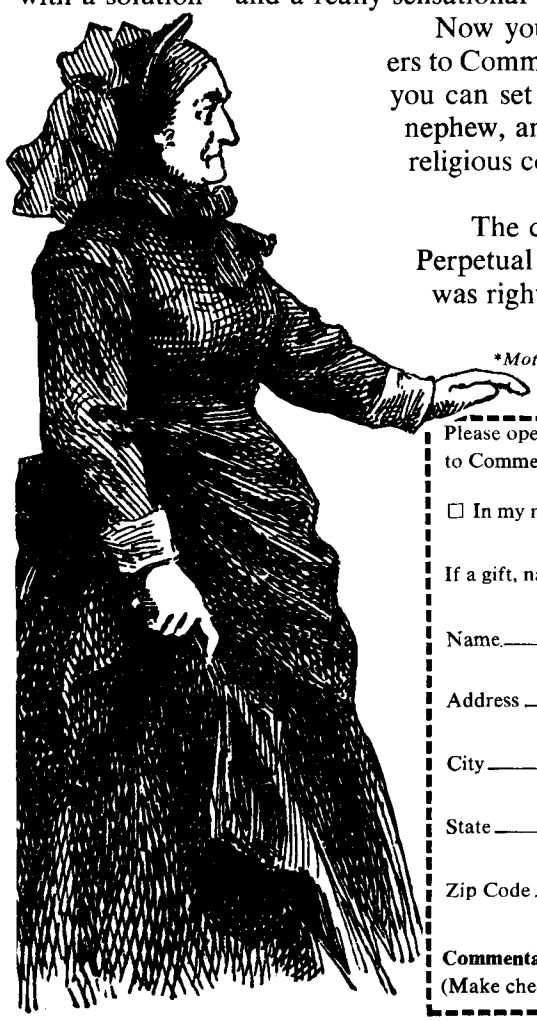

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organization of the old Muslim empires. Within them, and in Palestine, the Jews were always recognized as distinct communities with some limited degrees of autonomy. Indeed, from the point of view of Middle Eastern history, Israel can be viewed as a coming together of these historic Jewish communities into one self-governing whole. However, it must be remembered that these *millets*, as they were called, suffered consistently from the exploitation and discrimination and threats of an assertive Arab majority. Hussein's new and innovative idea, therefore, is in reality merely a return to the old Arab imperialism. The Arabs will agree, he offers, to recognize the Israelis as a *millet* if the Israelis will submit once again to the political limitations and the economic restrictions and even to the "cultural adaptations" which an Arab majority will see fit to impose. "Our starting point," states Hussein imperiously, "is not what is acceptable to Israel, but what is required by the Arabs." This may be questionable Marxism—but it is certainly orthodox Islam. Has Hussein never heard of the Covenants of Omar? What is even more to the point, has Friedlander never heard of the Covenants of Omar? *He* doesn't mention them, either.

Friedlander's defense of Israel comes from other quarters. He asks, first of all, for understanding of "the constant, living bond between the Jewish people and the land of Israel." He speaks of the Jewish religion, and Jewish prayers, and "an aspiration that is literally almost two thousand years old."

It would be interesting to know why Friedlander thought that these two young Arabs—either as Marxists or as Muslims—could be expected to be responsive to Jewish religious sensibilities. One would think that the record would lead to quite the opposite conclusion. Marxism and Islam, as religions, and each in its own way, have asserted a dogmatic and historic precedence over Judaism and, in fact, a moral imperative to triumph over it. Since Friedlander makes plain that he had hoped to establish some common base of understanding with the Arabs, one must wonder why he chose this approach. It failed, of course.

Friedlander also strives for recognition by Hussein of the problems of Israeli security and the preservation of Israeli independence. To this he can get no response which is not ultimately negative. Hussein will only discuss *rights*, and these only, he says again and again, in the context of the Middle East and its traditions. In this context he clearly does not believe that Israel has a right to independence. He insists upon "the need to replace the old language with a new one, to speak of natural and inalienable rights instead of the balance of power and systems of security. . . . The Arab peoples reason in terms of fundamental rights," he repeats.

Therefore, if Friedlander has not vigorously and effectively defended the fundamental, natural, inalienable, and historic rights of the Jewish people in the Middle East, if he has not forcefully attacked the Arabs for their historic as well as more recent denial of those rights, upon what ground does he stand in demanding Arab recognition of the security of the State? Yet he rests his case simply, at the end as in the beginning, upon a brief statement of the religious bond alone.

For the rest, the book contains much dispute about such matters as who did what in 1967, and who thought what in 1973, and who said what in 1920. There is much lengthy discourse about politicians and people, terrorism and borders, Zionism, Jerusalem, and plans for peace. Only in some lesser sense can one call the book a dialogue; the contacts of perception and purpose are tangential at best.

The two young Arabs are altogether self-righteous and arrogant, given to torrents of numbing radical rhetoric and such a passion of theory and dogma that the real world fades into abstraction and all compromise becomes heresy. They speak in the name of an Arab people whom they paint larger than life with humiliations, agitations, frustrations, and a feverish intensity of needs and demands and revolutionary visions. All other peoples are blocked from view, and the Israelis become shadows and symbols, virtually without a reality of their own.

Friedlander, outnumbered and out-talked, is tolerant, didactic, defensive, and finally weary. He has no appetite for ideological battle. His goal is to achieve some degree of pragmatic understanding, but without really digging into the root assumptions of Arab theory and mythology. Above all, he does not wish to present the Arabs with a bill from the Jewish past. Apparently he does not wish to make them feel guilty. Thus, for example, he discusses the Holocaust, but makes no mention of any Arab massacres or persecutions of the Jewish people. In particular, he says nothing about the sad centuries of Jewish poverty and impotence and exploitation under Arab domination in Palestine. He is apologetic, and therefore defenseless, and in this he demonstrates all too well the ideological weakness of that "liberal current of thought" which he represents.

Freedom Fighters

My Country and the World. By Andrei D. Sakharov. *Knopf. 109 pp. $5.95.*

Dissent in the USSR: Politics, Ideology, and People. Edited by Rudolf L. Tökés. *Johns Hopkins. 453 pp. $15.00.*

Reviewed by Jeri Laber

"I had money . . . title, and everything which my work entitled me to have. But I had a very tragic feeling." This is how the Soviet physicist, Andrei Sakharov, once described the years which preceded his open break with the Soviet establishment.

Sakharov's stunning transformation—from "father of the Soviet hydrogen bomb" to Nobel Peace Prize winner—was not the result of a sudden, dramatic revelation.

Jeri Laber *writes widely on Soviet affairs. Her essay, "The Real Solzhenitsyn," appeared in our May 1974 number.*

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Rather, his ideas and his political stance have evolved slowly and steadily, generated by a penetrating intelligence, unbending honesty, and moral integrity. His writings reflect the personal and intellectual qualities that have come to be associated with the man: unpretentiousness, acute sensitivity to injustice, personal and political idealism, solid, unflamboyant courage, and an open, flexible mind.

Unlike Solzhenitsyn—whose role as leader of the Soviet dissidents was quietly assumed by Sakharov after Solzhenitsyn's forcible exile in 1974—Sakharov was not an early victim of Soviet terror and oppression. To the contrary, as a member of the Soviet scientific elite he was favored both with material comforts and unprecedented professional acclaim; at thirty-two, he became the youngest scientist ever to be made a full member of the prestigious USSR Academy of Sciences. It is not coincidental that a surprisingly large number of Soviet dissidents have come from the scientific community. Not only does their high status in Soviet society give them greater access to ideas and information, but the relatively apolitical insulation of pure science has shielded them from the debilitating intellectual compromises demanded of successful writers, historians, and social scientists.

THE evolution of Sakharov's life and views is traced minutely in a scholarly essay by Peter Dornan entitled "Andrei Sakharov: The Conscience of a Liberal Scientist," one of twelve disparate pieces in Rudolf Tökés's compilation, *Dissent in the USSR*. This thorough, but often tedious, factual account of Sakharov's life through early 1974 fails, unfortunately, to illuminate the phenomenon of the Soviet scientist-turned-dissident. It does, however, provide background—more than is necessary—to the issues posed in Sakharov's latest book, *My Country and the World*.

Sakharov's views have been revised considerably since his first major essay, *Progress, Coexistence, and Intellectual Freedom*, was

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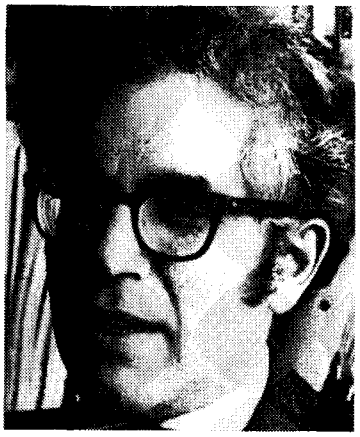

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published abroad in 1968. The earlier piece, stimulated by his concern about nuclear war, advanced the thesis that socialism and capitalism would eventually converge as the West moved toward the Left politically and the Soviet bloc toward internal democratization. At that time Sakharov still considered himself a socialist; his essay appeared during the optimistic interlude remembered as the Prague Spring, and his words greatly affected intellectuals both within the Soviet bloc and abroad, many of whom shared Sakharov's belief that the time was right for a loosening of Soviet internal restrictions and for greater international cooperation.

Instead, 1968 saw Soviet tanks in Czechoslovakia and a new wave of oppression within the USSR. Sakharov's security clearance was revoked and he was dismissed from his job. With "pain and alarm" he was forced to admit that the pre-1968 liberalism to which he had addressed himself in his essay had been "largely illusory." Yet his plea for Soviet-American cooperation, ignored by Soviet leaders and considered a bit naive by many in the West, especially after Prague, might seem to have been heeded after all. Today, only seven years later, détente is the professed policy of both the U.S. and the Soviet governments.

Sakharov, however, while recognizing "great changes for the better," is not content. In *My Country and the World*, which is addressed to Western rather than Soviet leaders, he expresses his fear that détente is being used as a "cynical political game serving . . . temporary political and economic interests." Crushed by the defeat of the Jackson amendment, which would have made U.S. trade concessions to the Soviet Union contingent upon a policy of free emigration for Soviet Jews, he blames divided and disorganized Western leaders who make political capital out of appeasing the Soviet regime. He points to "the amazing miscalculations and defeats of Western foreign policy, which without a struggle is yielding one concession after another to its partner in détente." He warns against "leftist-liberal

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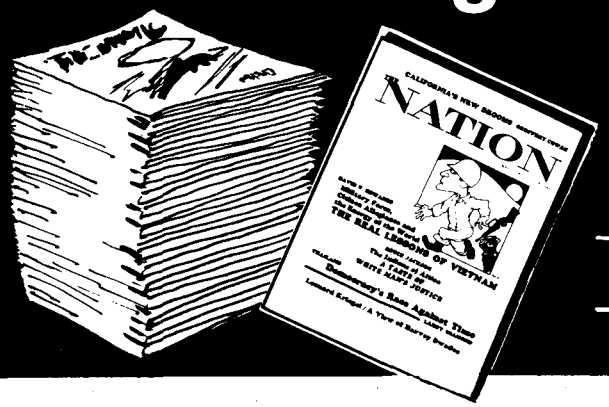

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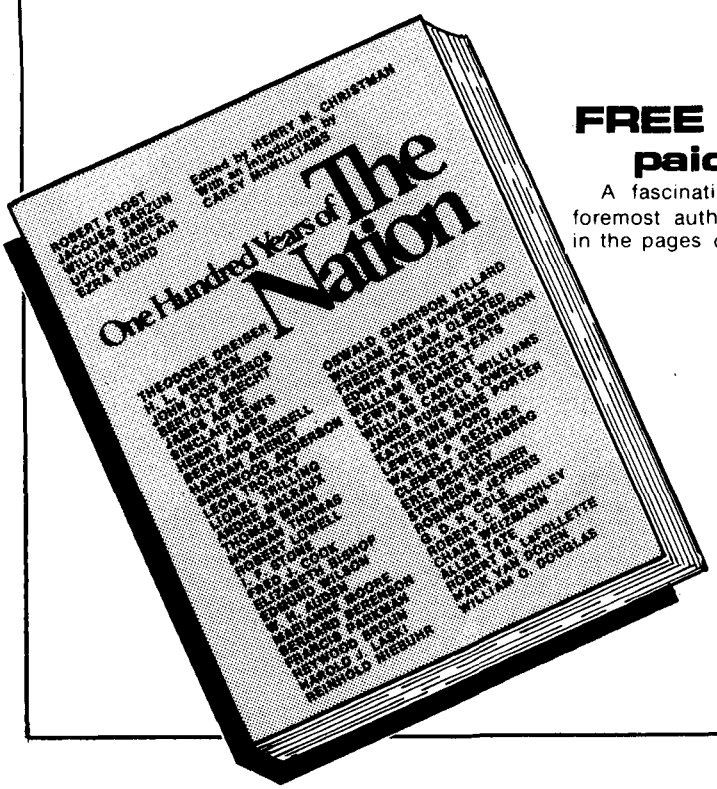

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faddishness" which may lead the West into unilateral disarmament, pointing out that "balanced disarmament . . . cannot be achieved from a position of weakness." He urges the West to mobilize its resources, to tighten its belt economically, and to work for political and economic unity under American leadership.

Real détente, in Sakharov's view, is linked inextricably with the democratization of Soviet society. He maintains his conviction that avoiding nuclear destruction takes priority over all else in international relations; nevertheless, disarmament cannot precede trust among nations which, in turn, is dependent upon "overcoming the secretiveness of Soviet society . . . and weakening its totalitarian character." His position was made clear in a 1973 interview with Western reporters:

> Détente without democratization, détente in which the West in effect accepts the Soviet rules of the game, would be dangerous. It would not really solve any of the world's problems and would simply mean capitulating in the face of real or exaggerated Soviet power. It would mean trading with the Soviet Union, buying its gas and oil, while ignoring all other aspects. . . .
>
> I think that if détente were to proceed totally without qualifications, on Soviet terms, it would pose a serious threat to the world as a whole. It would mean cultivating a closed country where anything that happens may be shielded from outside eyes, a country wearing a mask that hides its true face.
>
> I would not wish it on anyone to live next to such a neighbor, especially if he is at the same time armed to the teeth.

THE time seems right for Sakharov's admonition that the West be firmer in its dealings with the USSR. The word "détente," often used incorrectly as a synonym for "peace," seems more a slogan these days than a description of a significant development in international relations; it has been employed by the American government as justification for a series of one-sided concessions to the Russians, aimed, it appears, at achieving an arms accord before the 1976 elections. Yet Sakharov's belief that we can use our leverage to bring about volitional changes in Soviet internal policies seems highly unrealistic, for Moscow has demonstrated over and over again its firm opposition to outside interference in its domestic affairs. Indeed, Sakharov's appeal to the West to press for liberalization in the USSR may very well reflect his growing despair over the inefficacy of dissident action within the Soviet Union itself. Back in 1972, confronting the harsh campaign against dissidence that began in the early 1970's and has continued to this day, Sakharov stated:

> Our struggle is really useless and senseless. In ten years nothing will change. This country could perish but it would still be the same. We know we cannot change anything really, despite all the things I write. . . . No, I am not a pessimist, I am a born optimist. I am just making an objective analysis of the situation.

A similarly discouraging picture of the dissident movement emerges from the essays in *Dissent in the USSR*. The small band of active dissidents, estimated at between 1,000 and 2,000 out of a total Soviet population of more than 250 million, is not a "movement" at all but a number of loosely connected small groups lacking structure and consistency. Many dissidents have emigrated or have been forcibly expelled; others are in prison or in psychiatric hospitals. Their variegated ideological and ethnic loyalties sometimes cause disunity and make them vulnerable to police infiltration. KGB repression is effective and can succeed in driving a whole movement underground, almost overnight. And the dissidents lack mass support. As Walter Connor points out in an essay in this collection, for the ordinary Soviet citizen legality, representative institutions, and freedom are exotic concepts; many have never even heard of the dissidents we know so well in the West. There is general agreement among contributors to the book that if change does occur, it will be generations from now.

Dissent in the USSR closes with an essay by George Feifer on "The Passive Minority," in which he describes his own experiences with disaffected Soviet intellectuals, whom he calls "the silent haters." These people, according to Feifer, shun activism, not just because they fear police reprisal but because they see protest as pointless self-sacrifice. A common attitude, Feifer reports, is that "the country as a whole is backward and dark" and that the Russian people are "not only happy with the heavy hand of dictatorship but actually require it." These thoughts echo in the sentiments of an emigré playwright, Nina Voronel, who recently told the New York *Times* that "each people has the government it deserves" and that the Soviet regime "enjoys tacit support from a population that makes compromise a way of life." They remind me of a comment in a letter I recently received from a Russian emigré: "It's not Russia which has to be saved but the world which must be saved from Russia."

Both these books, one about dissenters and the other by a leading dissenter himself, leave the reader with a pervasive feeling of pessimism about the Soviet Union today, about the intentions of its leaders in pursuing a policy of détente with the West while continuing to use violence and repression at home, about the seemingly intractable difficulties faced by Soviet dissidents who want to change their society from within, and about the apparently fearful and conciliatory posture of the West in the face of all this. They also evoke wonder at men like Andrei Sakharov, whose very existence bears witness to a striving for freedom that cannot be suppressed.

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